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TANGLE GARDEN

Books by
ELIZABETH JANET GRAY

Merediths' Ann

Tangle Garden

Tilly-Tod

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WHILE THE OTHERS SANG IN THE OLD WAY, JILL AND BILLY TALKED

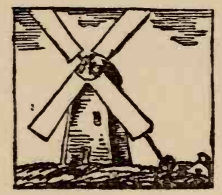
THE WINDMILL BOOKS

TANGLE GARDEN

A Story for Girls

By
ELIZABETH JANET GRAY

Illustrated by
G. B. CUTTS



Junior Books

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CONTENTS

		PAGE
PROLOGUE		1
CHAPTER I.	TANGLE GARDEN	3
II.	"WOULDN'T YOU, JILL?"	10
III.	BREAKFAST	24
IV.	SATURDAY	39
V.	THE FORTUNE	57
VI.	TALKING IT OVER	70
VII.	SHOPPING	81
VIII.	WEST POINT	96
IX.	AFTERMATH	117
X.	MOVING	127
XI.	GRAYLOCK	147
XII.	THE YOUNG DALES GIVE A PARTY	164
XIII.	SUMMER PLANS	182
XIV.	PHILANTHROPY	204
XV.	AND RANDY LAUGHED	217
XVI.	CLAUDE AND BILLY	236
XVII.	"AN' IF THE SKY SHOULD FALL..."	251
XVIII.	"IS TED IN YET?"	268
XIX.	JILL GROWS UP	286
XX.	THE KING OF FRANCE	300
XXI.	CHRISTMAS EVE	316

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TANGLE GARDEN

TANGLE GARDEN

PROLOGUE

In the chilly March moonlight, the old-fashioned tangle garden that gave its name to the big, shabby, comfortable home of the seven Dales, was a little bit ghostly. The low boards that confined the flower beds were frosted; the hard-trodden dirt paths that separated bed from bed (roses in summer, and poppies, wine-red hollyhocks, masses of bachelor's buttons, larkspur, mignonette, columbine, dripping rose and purple and palest yellow, tall white spikes of foxgloves) gleamed with bits of mica and showed every hollow and unevenness shadowed by the moon; a few dead leaves scurried against the boards, and frozen bushes whispered in the wind.

Under the huge black beech trees, the windows of the old stone house sent out a glow of warmth and cheeriness. The big front door opened, and a girl in a scarlet frock came out to stand for a moment on the white portico, tall and slender in the frame of the doorway, with the hall light behind her making a halo of her golden hair.

CHAPTER I

TANGLE GARDEN

"SUPPOSE," said Jill Dale, tying an apron over her scarlet frock, "suppose somebody died and left us a fortune—someone we'd never known and wouldn't feel sorry about—what would you do with it?"

"I'd go abroad and study singing," said Susan promptly.

Randy took the last cookie before he piled the empty plate on the tea wagon that was stacked with the dinner dishes. "And then you'd come back as Mademoiselle Susetta Daleovitch," he prophesied, "and we'd all go to hear you and sit all the way across the front row. And the newspapers would call you the youngest singer in captivity. If I had a fortune I'd buy a ranch out West and have a million horses on it and cattle stampedes and rodeos and that sort of thing. No girls allowed."

"Yes, and you'd come trotting home to Mother the first time a buffalo growled at you," said Susan wickedly.

"I'd buy a house," Jill put in hastily, "a real house,

with terraces and French windows and tiled bathrooms, and I'd fill it with books and pictures and Oriental rugs and struggling young writers and artists —and I think," she finished, pulling a chair away from the table and setting it down with a thud against the wall, "that I'd give a dance every other night."

"All your struggling young writers would put you in their books," suggested Randy. He began in a dreamy tone to quote from an imaginary novel, the masterpiece of one of Jill's tame authors. "'The lovely lady of the manor, gowned in a lovely sweeping gown of white velvet, swept into the manorial hall. She was——' What would you do, Mums," he broke off, as Mrs. Dale appeared in the doorway, "if you had a fortune?"

"I?" Mrs. Dale's chuckle was as young and infectious as Jill's own. "Oh, I think I'd have the cellar door mended, and have the old fireplace in the parlor unbricked and restored, and buy you children a phonograph that wouldn't stick in the middle of every record, and get a new rug for—— What's the joke?" She stopped, looking from one smiling face to the other.

Jill laughed. "We were talking about a *fortune*," she explained, "and you began to mend the cellar door!"

Jill's voice was one of the most charming things about her. It was deep and sweet and vibrant, with

all sorts of little lights and curves and half-tones that most people's voices don't have.

"Well, really, Jill," replied her mother seriously, "if some of the old shabbinesses of this house were just cared for, I wouldn't ask for any more of a fortune than that—and good health for all of us, and some money in the bank. Ted hasn't come in yet?" she ended abruptly.

"No. No sign of him. And he's going to a dance, too!" Susan put the last doily away and rubbed the scarred mahogany table. "There. This job is done. Randy, go on and push Agnes into the kitchen."

Agnes was the tea wagon, an inexpensive one of fumed oak, neat, useful, and dependable, decidedly a worthy piece of furniture, but not the shining mahogany affair for which Jill had yearned. Everything in the Dale family had a name, from the Ark, their ancient car, to Pete, the cranky furnace. Agnes derived from the estimable lady of that name in *David Copperfield*, whose neat and solid virtues were intensely irritating to Jill, who on the whole preferred Dora—"even if she *was* a nit-wit."

"The seven-twenty hasn't come along yet," said Randy, who knew all the street-car, train, and boat schedules, even strange, unlikely ones like coalers departing for the West Indies. "He'll be on that all right."

The table cleared and the dining room straightened,

Randy pushed the tea wagon with its load of soiled dishes into the kitchen, Susan switched out the dining-room lights, and Jill went to the front door to look for the elder brother who was late.

It was a cold evening in March. The lights from the house were reflected in little black bits of ice that gleamed here and there in the rough, frozen ground, and the bare limbs of the beech trees made deep shadows over the long lawn that sloped down to the Pike. Beyond the creek that circled the old-fashioned tangle garden on one side of the house, a neighbor's cornfield stretched away to the thin strip of woods that in summer completely hid the houses which formed the outer fringe of Chestnut Hill. Now, however, the lights twinkled through the leafless trees, and over their tops, behind a thin church spire, a big red moon was slowly rising.

Jill stood there, thinking how beautiful the night was and forgetting that she was chilly, with her bare arms and thin frock.

"Jill," called Susan, "Mother says are you out there without anything around you?"

And Randy commanded: "Come in or stay out, but for the love of shad close the door!"

With a last glance at the moonlit loveliness outside, Jill went in again and shut the door behind her. A few minutes later a trolley whistled at the crossroads and stopped, and a boy of nineteen or twenty swung down

and cut across the lawn. He took the four front steps at a single bound and burst into the house. Dropping his overcoat on the battered sofa in the hall, he presented himself, knickered and red-cheeked and erratically ruffled as to hair—for the night was windy and it was his fancy not to wear a hat—at the door of the living room.

"Hello, everybody! Dinner all over?" he said cheerfully. "Save any wittles for me?"

This was Ted.

"What kept you so late? There's a letter from Billy for you upstairs. Haven't you had anything to eat?" said Jill all in one breath.

"Held up for a reserve book at the library. I'll get it in a minute. No, and I'm starved," answered Ted, methodically taking the questions in order. He was used to Jill's impetuous style.

Ted graced with his daily presence the university in the near-by city which, in spite of the half-hourly trolleys that thundered along the Pike at the foot of the lawn, was inconveniently far away for commuters. As the evening meal in the Dale household was supper at six instead of dinner at seven-thirty (which both Ted and Jill felt would be infinitely more *chic* and desirable) Ted was often late and had grown used if not reconciled to rations served on a plate and eaten in solitary grandeur at one end of the long dining-room table.

Mrs. Dale, darning stockings by the fat green lamp on the center table, looked up to say: "A letter came from West Point for you, dear, and I put it on your bureau."

"Thanks." Ted lingered by the fire until Jill, whose duty it was to see about his supper, rose from the cricket where she had been toasting herself and said teasingly:

"Run and wash your hannie-pannies, big boy, while I fish your plate out of the oven."

They were all there now, all of the seven Dales, from Mr. Dale, gray at the temples, down to Beverley, who bitterly resented being called the baby. Mrs. Dale, who looked young enough to be Jill's elder sister instead of her mother, raised her dark blue eyes from the appalling hole in the heel of Randy's stocking, and surveyed her flock with pride and a kind of affectionate humor.

They made an attractive picture, the five vivid young things in the old room. For all the shabbiness of its chipped white paint, faded wall paper, and unfashionable walnut furniture, the living room was a pleasant background for the Dale family. Through the clutter of school books, curling snapshots, tin fire engines, goldfish bowls, and the other inevitable treasures of five varied ages and interests, a few fine things shone out: the lines of the carved Colonial mantel, the blue and red and green ranks of Mr.

Dale's books, the unvarnished mahogany secretary in the corner, the paper-white narcissus in the jade green bowl with which beauty-loving Jill had tried to raise the esthetic level of the room, and the two or three really good etchings that Mrs. Dale had hung upon the faded walls. Jill, in the scarlet frock that had been the "best" of two seasons ago, perched like a red bird on the arm of a high-backed easy chair and flapped her apron at Ted to hurry him upstairs. Ted, college sophomore, football player, and social light of the house of Dale, leaned negligently against the mantelpiece and pointed with the toe of one shoe to the intricate arrangement of five blocks, a string, and the broken parts of a toy train, over which Beverley, sprawled at full length on the floor, was grunting and puffing in happy absorption.

"What's that, Bev?" he asked.

"Engine," replied Beverley briefly.

At the desk in the corner Randy bent his red head over his algebra, hunching his shoulders and winding his feet around the legs of his chair in an agony of concentration. Susan, brown-haired, fourteen, and persuasive, rose out of a sea of crumpled newspapers and hung over her father's shoulder to beg for more.

Ted, Jill, Randy, Susan, Beverley: the five young Dales of Tangle Garden.

CHAPTER II

"WOULDN'T YOU, JILL?"

THE next moment the picture had broken up. Ted, pausing to tweak the three hairs that stood erect from the crown of Beverley's bulletlike little head, stepped over engine and engineer both and went upstairs. Jill, followed by Susan, departed to get his supper, and Beverley, having been warned that it was bedtime, begged for just five minutes more and then proceeded to spend the time thus gained in pleading for a second extension.

In the kitchen the supper dishes, piled helter-skelter on the tea wagon just as it had been brought from the dining room, waited still to be washed. Lura, the Dales' colored cook, a devoted but cross-grained old tyrant who had nursed all five as babies, rocked comfortably back and forth in a low wicker chair by the stove.

"Jill," she said in her cracked voice—and for the thousandth time Jill told herself indignantly that her sixteen years really did deserve the dignity of the prefix "Miss"—"you-all will have to wash the dishes

to-night. The rheumatiz in my hands is wuss than usual."

If it wasn't the rheumatiz, it was the haid-ache. Jill sighed. But servants were hard to get, so far out of the city—especially when you couldn't pay them any more than the Dales could afford—and besides, Lura's twenty years of faithfulness had made her almost a member of the family. In fact, Jill, who loathed washing dishes and peeling potatoes and sweeping under beds, sometimes complained that Lura was its most privileged member.

The swinging door burst open with a rush and a shiver, and Ted stuck a sleek wet head through and demanded food. He was, it seemed, in a great hurry.

"I'm going to a dance to-night," he said frenziedly. "Sue, be a good little scout and run upstairs and see whether my shirt came back from the laundry and get the keys of the Ark from Dad."

Jill smiled as she knelt to open the door of the oven and take out a well-filled plate that had been put there some time before. This was just like Ted. He would loiter about, talking, as if he had nothing to do for days to come, and then suddenly he would wake up to the fact that the time was short, and he would turn the whole household upside down until, in a perfect tornado of haste, he was ready and off.

"Well," Jill defended him to herself, "I'd rather do things in a rush myself." And she wished—how she

wished—that she too were hurrying to get ready for a dance.

The plate was hot, and she doubled up a corner of her apron to protect her fingers as she carried it into the dining room where Ted was already beginning on bread and butter.

"Is Dabney going to be there?" asked Jill, slipping sidewise into a chair, ready to jump up in case anything were forgotten.

Dabney Baird was the object of Ted's present affections. Pretty and petted, she lived with wealthy, adoring grandparents and had everything, so Jill thought, that any girl could possibly wish for.

"I don't know," said Ted. "Guess so."

"That's a lie," said Jill pleasantly. "You know she will. Got the supper dance with her?"

"Mmmhmmm."

There was a pause, while Ted ate away with one eye on the cuckoo clock in the corner, and Jill pictured the Bairds' big house in one of the most fashionable suburbs, and the roses and limousines and soft-footed servants that made life easy and beautiful for Dabney.

"What's the dessert?" Ted broke in on her thoughts. "Rice pudding again?"

"Boiled babies."

This cannibalistic term was the family name for those round, plump, pink and white cherries that

come in cans and are used for dessert when invention or the cook's good nature fails. Jill thumped a saucer of them in front of Ted, and then sat down opposite to him with her elbows on the table and her chin cupped in her hands.

"I'd like," she declared in the tone of one who has suffered all, "to have some chocolate frappé or a meringue or bombe glacée—anything," she finished tragically, "but just plain, unvarnished food!"

Ted, attacking the stewed infants with uncritical appetite, stopped with spoon in air.

"True!" he exclaimed in imitation of Jill's intensity. "True! After all, what is there left in life, unless the food is varnished?"

"Idiot," said Jill, laughing in spite of herself. She was entirely hardened to being teased by her brothers for what they called her "yearnings toward high life."

Ted finished the last cherry but abandoned the juice. He had to hurry, he said, and off he went, leaving his napkin, as an afterthought, draped over the door knob. Jill rescued and folded it, rolled it into his silver ring, and dropped it in the top drawer of the sideboard, where the six other Dale napkins were already reposing. Three of the rings were silver, and three—the younger ones—were of some less expensive substance, Beverley's trusty bib being held in the embrace of a pleasant-faced wooden rabbit

minus one ear. Jill, pushing in the drawer with a jerk that made the silver jingle, heard Ted upstairs whistling as he went about his dressing, and was once again rebellious at a scheme of things that presented her brother, only three years her senior, with the cream of life and left her at home to scour the milk bottle.

She piled Ted's dinner plate, butter plate, saucer, and tumbler into a tottering tower and turned toward the kitchen. Susan, slipping up behind her, flung herself against the swinging door and held it open.

"Jill, it's your turn to do them," she said, lisping a little because of the gold bands that had recently been put in to straighten out a slight crimp in her pretty teeth, "because I did them all by myself last night, but I'll help you if you'll help me crack black walnuts for the cake to-morrow afternoon."

"You're a dear, Sukey. Let's whoop them through. I haven't done all my lessons yet."

Sue rolled up her sleeves in a businesslike way and tied a voluminous red and white checked apron over her dress. Silently they attacked the dishes, scraping, stacking, clattering knives and forks, until the table at the left of the sink was filled with neat piles of dishes waiting for the hot suds. Susan, towel in hand, took up her position at Jill's right.

First the glasses, then the cups and saucers, then the plates, and finally the silver. The water began to grow cool and gray and a bit greasy. Jill, wrinkling

her pretty nose in disgust, poured it out and started to fill the pan afresh.

"Nobody knows how I *abhor* dishwashing," she said feelingly.

"Well, if they don't," observed Randy, passing through the kitchen on his way to the supply cellar where there was a barrel of big red apples, "it's not because you don't tell them a hundred times a day!"

Jill, deigning no reply, turned on the water full tilt to drown out the sound of his words. It rushed clattering and steaming into the aluminum pan, and in a moment Ted howled down from the top of the back stairs,

"For cat's sake, turn it off! I can't get a drop of water up here when you're running it like that in the kitchen!"

Hastily, Jill pushed the handle of the faucet back. She knew only too well the exasperation of having the water suddenly gurgle and fail just when it was most needed.

"Stid of grumbling about having to wash the dishes," put in Lura reprovingly from her seat by the stove, "you ought to be plumb thankful you've got hands to do it with."

The idea did not appeal. Hands—and some other things—Jill took for granted. Thankfulness for the mere commonplaces of life seemed to her dreary.

"Goodness, Lura, what a sordid philosophy!" she protested.

"You ought to be thankful, your Elegance," added Randy, reappearing with bulging cheeks, "that you've got dishes *to* wash. Plenty of folks haven't. Pretty dishes, too—all different colors, for variety!"

He waved his apple toward the motley array of Dale dishes, not more than four of which bore the same pattern.

Jill laughed, her spirits rising with the end of her bout with the frying pan. Some day, she told herself, she would have everything right—unchipped Dresden china (washed by servants), fragile goblets, roses, thick rugs, flame-colored silk hangings. She wrung out the dish cloth and hung it up.

"All finished!" she announced.

They returned to the living room, and Jill resolutely opened her Vergil and began hewing out fifty lines of the sufferings of the ill-fated Dido. The room was quiet except for the whisper of the fire on the hearth and the flutter of paper as Mr. Dale or Randy turned a page in his book. Beverley was in bed, and Mrs. Dale had gone upstairs to tie Ted's tie for him.

Presently he came running down the stairs, looking very tall and handsome and well-groomed in his tuxedo. There was a general flutter of admiration that lasted till he had disappeared through the back

door and headed whistling for the old stable that was dignified by the term garage.

Jill, one finger in her book to keep the place, went to the window and looked out. The sloping roof of the garage gleamed in the moonlight as if it were covered with snow, and the big old trees made black patterns of shadows on the lawn. In a moment came the sound of the engine, and then the headlights swept against the house and across the lawn as Ted swung out into the driveway in the huge, high-topped, rattling old seven-seater.

"Cinderella and the coach and four," said Jill with a chuckle, adding as an afterthought that the old car was "ratty" enough.

The depression that had been hovering all evening descended like a curtain between her and the Latin she conscientiously tried to study. Closing her book with a snap, she decided to "bluff it" to-morrow.

"Oh, me!" she sighed, stretching out her feet in front of her and folding her arms behind her head, "what a life!"

Mr. Dale lowered his book. "Blue, old girl?" he said sympathetically.

"No, not really," replied Jill, getting up restlessly. "I'd just like to be rich and grown-up."

"I expect you'll be that soon enough, dear child."

"Grown-up, yes," Jill assented gloomily. "But I

don't see any chance of being rich. Unless I marry money—and that's a good deal of a risk."

"Yes," agreed her father gravely, "it is. How about a game of Russian Bank?"

Jill was getting out the cards when her mother reminded her: "Jill, what about that barn-door tear in the front of your green homespun skirt?"

"Oh, Jiminy, I forgot it!"

Jill's casualness about her clothes was a family grief. If she looked well—and, miraculously, she generally did—it was because, with her slimness, her clear, transparent skin and golden hair, her big gray eyes that could be green or blue according to the color of her frock, anything was becoming to her, and not because of the way her clothes were put on or the care they had when off. With Jill, dressing was simply a matter of donning some garments—no more than convention demanded—and forgetting them. If there were buttons, she buttoned them; if they happened to be missing, Jill never knew the difference. She wore a hunter's green coat and a hat to match with a perky little sliver of red and green feather in the band; she wore a powder-blue velveteen sports frock under a tan ulster; she wore, as to-night, a scarlet frock with white pleated ruffles at the neck and sleeves; all three rigs were plainly of last year's vintage, or the year before, and in all three, shabby as they were, she was undeservedly lovely. Still, it was

a trial to her mother to see Jill's sweaters pulled out of shape because the pockets had been filled with heavy things, her frocks creased where she had thrown them over a chair instead of hanging them in the closet, her silk blouse decorated with an ink stain. It was a trial to Jill, too, and whenever a fresh evidence of carelessness was discovered, she made valiant efforts at reform.

"I know I'm sloppy," she said once plaintively, with that frankness that was one of her outstanding characteristics, "but I *am* clean. I take lots of baths." Which, it must be admitted, is commendable, when you consider that the Dale house was badly heated and that it had but one bathroom.

"I'll go get it," she said now, referring to the skirt with the three-cornered tear. "I surely do need a lady's maid!"

She ran upstairs for her sewing kit and the garment.

It was cold in the big front chamber that she and Susan occupied together, and the simplicity of the room, with its rag rugs over straw matting, its white iron bedsteads, its dotted Swiss curtains that were blowing a little in the wind that seeped in around the old-fashioned small-paned windows, made it seem even chillier than it was. Susan, faintly pink as to nose, was tidily straightening out the top drawer of the big walnut bureau.

"Sue, it's cold as Greenland in here," said Jill. "Why didn't you light the oil stove?"

"It smells," said Susan flatly.

Jill, wrinkling her nose, admitted that it did. She hated the odor of the ugly little oil stove that supplemented the uncertain heat from the furnace.

"I wish," she said abruptly, "that I were Dabney Baird!"

Susan looked at her with wide-open brown eyes.

"Ye-es," she agreed slowly, "the parties and her new fur coat, and having breakfast in bed. But, Jill, she has to live all alone with just her grandparents, and Ted says she gets dreadfully lonely sometimes."

Jill smiled at Susan's earnestness. She felt a sudden burst of affection for old Sue—Sue who was incalculably young in Jill's eyes because she had not yet begun to wonder, a little wistfully, what the future held, nor to chafe at the limitations of an income uncomfortably small for a family of seven, and who was incredibly old in her own eyes because she was president of her class at school and could be trusted at home with domestic responsibilities of a serious nature. Jill put her arm around the younger girl's shoulder and planted a long squeaky kiss on the back of her neck.

"Bless you, honey, I wouldn't trade you all in for a million fur coats and breakfasts in bed!" she said, laughing.

Susan flushed happily and covered her pleasure by wriggling free and protesting that Jill "tickled."

At that moment Beverley, in a small imperious voice, called for a "drink." Jill took it to him in the little room opening out from his parents', where he slept. The wind was blowing a gale, and the window shade was flapping noisily, and Beverley, attired in canton flannel night drawers, sneezing and sniffling and puffing, staggered up and down on the top of his bed, struggling to remake it. He had, it developed, smuggled a piece of cake to bed with him to ward off probable starvation, and now the crumbs were keeping him from going to sleep. Jill bundled him in a blanket and deposited him in the comparatively warm corridor while she straightened out the tumbled bed and brushed away the remains of his contraband feast. At the first small convulsive sneeze from the hall, Mrs. Dale came running upstairs, and Jill was dispatched to the dark kitchen where the fire still glowed faintly through the cracks of the range, to make hot lemonade. On her return, after a second trip down for more sugar, she glanced into Ted's room, and seeing in what a mess he had left it in his haste, stopped to put it to rights—a kindness to which only extreme affection for her brother incited her, for Jill's sense of order was not her strong suit. A letter, still unopened, was propped against a glass candlestick on the bureau.

"I wonder what Billy's writing such a fat letter about," she thought, reuniting two widely divorced

shoes with a neat flick of her foot. She turned down the bed and put out his pajamas and bathrobe before she switched out the lights and left the room.

In the hall she met her mother, who was closing Beverley's door behind her.

"Poor little sinner!" said Mrs. Dale softly.

Jill looked at her mother curiously. She knew what her day had been: planning for the health and well-being of six people, directing the slow activities of old Lura, finishing a new frock for Susan, consulting mysteriously with Father about business—and business, Jill had learned, was apt to be agitating—darning stockings all evening. With her beauty, Jill thought—even in her weariness she was lovely, with a serenity and a depth of sweetness that the girl, sensitive and imaginative as she was, only half realized—with her charm and brilliant mind, she ought to have a different kind of life, a life such as the mothers of Ted's wealthy friends lived. It was a waste for her to be darning stockings and planning hash lunches; it was—Jill found the word that at this stage of her development seemed to describe almost every phase of their life—it was sordid. Rebellion at their lack of means boiled up in Jill once more.

"Angel child, you look so tired," said Mrs. Dale. "Do go to bed."

"Jill!" Randy was shouting from the foot of the stairs. "Jill, come give me a lift with my Latin. Dad

says I've got to go to bed, and I haven't finished my Cæsar. I can't make head or tail out of the blooming stuff!"

It was a chronic complaint. Randy barely managed, with the help of everyone he could enlist, to scrape through his Latin.

"Oh, Ran!" protested Jill. Then, "All right, I'm coming!" she called.

Susan, comfortable in quilted wrapper and slippers, followed her to the head of the stairs. "Jill," she said, leaning over the banister, "wouldn't you really?—trade us, I mean."

"No, of course I wouldn't," Jill replied. "Of course not," she repeated with a shade less conviction in her voice.

CHAPTER III

BREAKFAST

BREAKFAST at the Dales' on week-day mornings was at seven. At ten minutes of seven Jill rolled over in bed and opened one sleepy eye. Susan had already got up, closed the windows, and lighted the oil stove, and was now busily brushing her short brown hair before the mirror. The sun came streaming in the east window, shining on frilly white curtains, torn matting, and the scarred white iron of Jill's bedstead. Outdoors a robin sang ecstatically.

"Funny how nice robins are in the spring," observed Jill, drawing her knees up into a white mountain, "and then in summer they get fat and stodgy and middle-aged and aren't interesting at all!" She reached out for the alarm clock that lay on its face between the two beds, the only position in which the aged "Baby Ben" consented to tick. "Jiminy! It's late! I'll have to hurry!"

But she found time to pause in wrapper and slippers to look out of the window. The morning was dazzling with all the glory of earliest spring. The robin was singing on a limb of one of the beech trees so close

under the window that Jill could see all the way down his red throat when he opened his mouth to utter his insistent and triumphant Cheer-up cheeree's. The wind made ripples over the creek where it widened out into the swimming hole; two yellow crocuses and a snowdrop had come out during the night; the shadows on the awakening green of the lawn were cool and sharp and thin, as they are for just a little while when the year is young.

"It's all so fresh and new," sighed Jill. "I'd like to be all made over to go with it—new clothes and new feelings and new things to do. I'm sick of the same old things. Something will have to happen soon, surely. We haven't had any melodram for an age, Sue!"

"Melodram," to Jill and Susan, was any form of excitement that descended unexpectedly and upset temporarily the regular routine of things.

"Not since the pipes burst," agreed Susan absently, referring to a lively occasion when Beverley, after one of his periodic disappearances, had been discovered in the cellar wading rapturously ankle deep in icy water. "Do hurry, Jill."

The green skirt had not been mended, after all, the evening before, and so Jill wriggled perforce into her "other" school frock, the faded blue velveteen that was beginning to wear smooth in places, but which still made her eyes look like larkspurs. There was not time enough to put her hair "up" with many little

hairpins and a hair net—blonde, cap, single mesh—and so she dashed at it hurriedly with a brush till it gleamed like pale gold, and left the short strands to curl on her neck in a way that is unbecoming to most people but which managed somehow to look individual and quaint with her. With a hasty tug at her stocking and a twitch at her wide blue suède belt, Jill was ready.

In the dining room she found the usual pre-breakfast confusion. Mr. Dale, standing by the window, was "just glancing" at the stock-market quotations in the paper; Susan and Randy were calling Beverley, who, according to his custom of being never at hand when wanted and always under foot when not wanted, had disappeared. Lura was bringing in the coffee pot and muttering to herself; there was no sign of Ted, and Mrs. Dale was saying mildly—her daily protest—"I don't see why we can't all get to breakfast on time!"

The next moment everything subsided. A firm hand (Randy's) captured Beverley, planted him on his chair, and tied his bib around his neck; Ted came down the stairs, two at a time; they all took their places; Beverley said Grace, with his head piously ducked and one bright brown eye on Randy's orange, which was bigger than his own; and the day began.

Breakfast at the Dales' was their pleasantest meal. The morning sun streamed through the big bay win-

dow where Mrs. Dale's table of ferns and waxy begonias stood, and gleamed on chipped white paint and scarred mahogany. The early morning grouch which is prevalent in some households didn't exist here, partly because the Dales had a natural fund of good humor and courtesy, and partly because it was almost the only time of the day when all seven were together (for only Mrs. Dale and Beverley were home for lunch, and Ted was generally away for supper) and there were so many things to talk over and laugh about that they were all interested and alert. They had breakfast early, too, so that there was time for a leisurely and conversational meal.

"One thing I positively refuse to do," Mrs. Dale said firmly, "is to allow my children to go off to school on a gulp of milk and a piece of toast snatched on the wing."

Mrs. Dale sat at one end of the table, with the coffee pot on her right and Beverley on her left; Jill, between Ted and Randy, presided over the cocoa for the younger fry, and Mr. Dale at the foot dispensed cream of wheat. It was often said that the Dale children got their good looks from their mother and their brains from their father. Which, besides being tactless, was hardly fair to either parent, for Mrs. Dale could have passed any intelligence test with honors, and Mr. Dale was one of those homely men who are more attractive than the handsome ones. He

was tall, with sandy hair that was turning gray, bushy eyebrows that almost met, brown eyes behind tortoise-shell-rimmed spectacles, a blunt nose, and a scrubby moustache over a big mouth full of the most dazzling white teeth. He was popular with everyone, and adored by his children, whom, as Jill often said, he treated "like people and not mere offspring." It was Jill, too, who pointed out to Ted, sometimes suspected—not without cause—of vanity, that "men can't get by with *much* personal beauty."

Certain of the family features could be traced directly to Mr. Dale: Randy's red hair, Susan's and Beverley's brown eyes, Ted's height, Jill's wide mouth and charming smile; but their finely chiselled noses, long thick lashes, soft skin and warm color, and indefinable look of distinction were derived from their mother.

Breakfast started with the reiteration of "Please pass" and "Will you have," inevitable in supplying seven people simultaneously with food. Jill, after she had done her duty by the cocoa, had requested Randy, who had a bad habit of stretching his feet out under the table, to stop kicking her, and had warned Susan that Beverley would upset his glass of milk all over her if it weren't moved to a safer position, found that Ted was propping a letter in front of her plate.

"Read that, old dear," he said with emphasis.

Gathering from his tone that here was something

out of the ordinary, Jill drew the gray sheets, embossed in gold with the splendid West Point seal, from their envelope, and, oblivious to the chatter about her, read the closely written lines of Billy's script.

Billy Wyeth was one of the Dales' oldest and closest friends. In fact, before he had gone away to school he had been almost one of the family, for he found the shabby, jolly old home of the Dales so much more attractive than the gloomy, mansard-roofed mansion about a mile up the Pike in which he and his father, an eccentric and not too affable old gentleman, lived in lonely state, that he was always to be found somewhere about the Dale place—in the swimming hole, or in the parlor winding the victrola, or in the kitchen helping to wipe the dishes. He was a yearling now at West Point. At Christmas he had come home for the first time in a year and a half, gorgeous in his cadet gray and brass buttons and his military erectness; and they had taken up all the old threads just as they were before, except that in that time Jill had begun to grow up and Billy had recognized the fact.

DEAR TED (this is for Jill too):

Jill read, while Susan asked her father what the weather man said for to-day, and Randy related to the table at large the story of the latest blunder made by Sue, who was a regular little Mrs. Malaprop and

could not keep straight the long words she so loved to use.

I had a brain wave to-day, and here it is. In fact, I've thought of it before, but I've been waiting for the right time. We play Yale Saturday week in basket ball, and there's a hop that night. Can't you persuade your dad to drive you up for game and hop? Weather's pretty settled now and I think I can promise you a keen time. Please try to work it. I'd surely love to have you . . .

The letter went on, but Jill stopped. A motor trip to West Point! The Army-Yale basket-ball game! And—glory of glories!—a cadet hop!

"And Sue said," Randy was approaching his climax, "Sue said, 'I can't say the word but I've got it in my head!' And, Dad, listen, the word was *vacuum!*"

"Jill, Jill, come down to earth!" suggested Mrs. Dale. "Eat your breakfast, dear."

"She looks like Joan of Arc hearing voices," chuckled Susan.

Jill, who was indeed seeing visions, turned with starry eyes to her mother.

"Mums, listen to this: Billy wants us—Dad and Ted and me—to drive up to West Point next Saturday—not to-morrow—for a basket-ball game—with Yale—and a hop! Oh, Mother, we've *got* to do it!" She wheeled around and attacked her father. "It's

melodram, Dad, and my life lately has been an arid desert—simply arid!"

"Deserts generally are," murmured Ted.

"Oh, you can be superior and blasé, you go to lots of parties and things," said Jill, "but I don't. Anyhow, you want to go to West Point, don't you?"

"Of course," replied Ted, irritatingly calm. "We could make an early start—about six—Dad, and go up the Lincoln Highway to New York. We'd get there in time for the game—even in the Ark."

There was a moment of tense silence. Jill looked eagerly from one to the other of her parents and read in their faces their words before they came. The expression of questioning, uncertainty, doubt, then Mrs. Dale's slow, regretful shake of her head, told Jill all she needed to know. Her heart went down like a bucket in a well, and the expectant joy drained slowly out of her face.

"Too expensive, I suppose," she said with a sigh that stirred the leaves of the fern in the center of the table.

"I'm so sorry, dearest," began her mother.

"It's too bad, old girl," said Mr. Dale, "but perhaps we can manage it later. I shouldn't be surprised if we could—and then we'd all go, make it a regular family bat!"

"*Later!*" Jill disposed of that. "It wouldn't cost so awfully much, Dad," she pleaded, waving away

the platter of omelet that Lura presented at her elbow. "I'll go without a birthday present."

As Jill's birthday was at least six months away, this accommodating offer caused a shadow of a smile to flicker about Mrs. Dale's lips.

"It isn't so much the money, Jill," explained her father, "though we *are* short of available cash right now."

"'As it always was and will be,'" interpolated Randy sotto voce.

"There *have* been extra expenses," Mr. Dale went on, paying no attention to his flippant second son, "but I shouldn't care to start out on a long trip like that in the Ark. It does pretty well about the city, but I never know when it's going to break down. Remember, we had to be towed in last Sunday afternoon."

"Extra expenses" there had been. First the crack in the chimney that had had to be mended by Italian stone masons (it was Jill's private opinion that they were Corsican brigands) to the tune of $125, and then the bands on Susan's teeth. The chimney was paid for, but Susan's teeth, having to be screwed up every week or so, would go on steadily taking the shine off the family income. And although it is not true that all honest lawyers are poor, it is certain that Mr. Dale of the firm of lawyers, Willis, West, and Dale, was both honest and poor.

"Well, that's that, then," said Jill, in a tone of resignation. "But if I wait till we have a new car to go to West Point in, I'll be an old lady and have to go on crutches," she added despondently.

"How could you dance on crutches?" inquired Beverley, emerging from his glass of milk with a rim of white all round his mouth.

"Bright lad! How could I?" agreed Jill. "Ted, when you write to Bill, leave a little room for me. You'd better let him know right away that we're not going."

Ted hesitated. "It's a rotten shame, Jill," he offered finally.

"Rotten for you, too. We're both in the same boat."

Again Ted hesitated. "I think I'll go anyhow—just for the game. Twig and I could go in his stripped-down Ford."

Twig was a fraternity brother of Ted's, a plump and engaging youth who was part possessor of one of those collegiate Fords labelled "Bored of Education" on the back and "No one dead in this Wreck" on the sides, which could be made to achieve an incredible speed (considering its dubious appearance) at serious risk to all concerned with it, whether meeting it on the road or bouncing about inside of it.

"You don't mind, do you, Jill?"

This was too much for Jill, "No, I don't mind"—

and theoretically she didn't—"I'm not a dog in the manger." She knew what kind of trip it would be—the struggling with the interior mechanism of Twig's unfortunate car, the drive home after the game, probably abandoning the car minus some parts in a New Jersey cornfield and hitch-hiking the rest of the way. It was not a means of transportation that appealed to her, but she did feel, illogically, that boys had all the fun! She rose from the table, taking the empty biscuit plate as an excuse.

"Anybody want more?" she asked. "I'll get them from the kitchen."

"I've about reached Braddocks," said Susan.

Some families have a language of their own, full of expressions that are meaningless to outsiders but which, originating in family happenings and stories, are familiar, well-loved short cuts for those who know them. "Reaching Braddocks" was one of these. In Mrs. Dale's home in Virginia, the old family custom of family prayers had prevailed—lengthy prayers, with the family in a circle in the center of the room and the servants in a circle around the edges at a respectful distance. Mrs. Dale's grandfather had been a very fluent pray-er; he prayed for every conceivable person and thing, and as the ceremony always took place before breakfast, the family, particularly the younger members, would often grow restless. One morning, a small boy who was visiting

in the household, becoming weary, nudged Mrs. Dale's father, then a lad of ten, and whispered, "Jim, how much longer is he going to pray?" Young Jim Randolph, who had not been paying attention, whispered back, "Has he got to Braddocks yet?" The other boy said, "No." "Well," explained Jim, "when he says 'for all those martyred at Braddocks' then he's about to stop." And so, getting to Braddocks meant, in the Randolph family first, and then with the Dales, reaching the point where you were about ready to stop.

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Jill put the plate down again.

"Well, as far as being poor is concerned," she said rebelliously, "I've about reached Braddocks."

The impulsive speech fell like a rock into the breakfast peace. Mrs. Dale, leaning over to assist Beverley, who had chased a refractory bit of omelet off his plate and was pursuing it across the tablecloth, looked up quickly, surprised and troubled. Randy began indignantly, "Jill, that's a rotten thing to say——"

Jill, who, as soon as the words were spoken had been sorry for them—sorry with the whole-hearted remorse that was characteristic of her—turned to her father to see if she had hurt him. (Hurt Dad, who worked so hard for all of them!) But he was looking out of the window and absently crumbling a bit of bread in his fingers. Evidently he had not heard it at all.

"Butter, please, Sue," said Ted smoothly, and the little crisis passed over.

"You children think so *much* about money," said Mrs. Dale in a low voice. "It worries me. I wonder if it would really make you happy to be rich."

"Perhaps not," said Jill, anxious to make amends.

"It would help a lot," Susan contributed conservatively.

"You have so much compared with what we had when we were growing up," said Mrs. Dale. "We lived on a plantation ten miles from a town, and there never was *any* money. Oh, there was always plenty to eat and to wear, and we had lots of company, but I don't believe I ever had a cent of my own till I was grown up. It took hours to go anywhere, over those perfectly execrable red clay roads, with a horse and carriage, and so we generally stayed home. And yet, we had good times, and as I look back over it all, we were very happy."

"Yes, but, Mother, you didn't have to see other people all around you having more than you had," said Jill.

"No," admitted Mrs. Dale. "Everyone was poor there for many a long year after the war. And yet," she added, "money isn't everything. You chickens have a great deal that the people around you have not."

"For instance?" said Randy, seeking information.

He had an open mind and was willing to be convinced. He was the only one of the three older children who never complained about the financial stringency.

Mrs. Dale rose, smiling quietly. "I'd rather you'd find that out for yourselves," she said. "Come, it's getting late. You mustn't miss your trolley."

Mr. Dale patted Jill's shoulder sympathetically as she started up the stairs. "Don't get discouraged," he said. "We'll manage it later."

Jill tried to be grateful for a promise that she felt to be well-intentioned but vague to the point of uselessness, but her disappointment still lay heavily on her heart. She was halfway up the stairs when the telephone rang. Randy, answering it, said, "Wait a minute," and called to his father, "It's for you, Dad—a telegram. Shall I take it, or will you?"

Mr. Dale preferred to take it himself. The rest of the family stood around, waiting a little anxiously, as a family does who receives telegrams but infrequently. There were many relatives scattered over the globe, and a telegram usually meant that something had gone seriously wrong with one of them.

"Business matter—nothing wrong," said Mr. Dale, hanging up the receiver. He sought his wife's eyes and seemed to convey a message to her. "I'll have to run over to New York."

Jill, looking at them, detected an air of suppressed excitement about both of them. She wondered mightily

but said nothing. There were chores to be done before school time, and she hurried to begin. Randy, following her up the stairs, whispered ticklingly in her ear, "Something's up! I sniff melodram!"

"No such luck!" said Jill.

"Oh, there are all kinds of melodram!" replied Randy with the utmost cheerfulness. "Maybe the mortgage is going to be foreclosed!"

Ten minutes to make beds and straighten rooms, to collect scattered school books and don overcoats and hats. Nine and a half minutes later the four streamed across the lawn, turning to wave to Mrs. Dale on the porch just before they boarded the eight-fifteen trolley. Susan, the last, dropped breathlessly into a cross-seat beside Jill.

"I went back for an apple," she panted, "and I might just as well not have. With all this hardware on my teeth, I can't bite into an apple with any pleasure at all!"

How young Susan was! All that the expensive braces meant to her was the impairment of the power to bite comfortably into a firm red apple! Jill felt very old, and worldly-wise, and a trifle cynical, which was on the whole a very pleasant feeling, and made her almost happy again.

CHAPTER IV

SATURDAY

"IS THIS the Bairds' house?" said Jill.

Ted swung the Ark into a driveway that wound like a prim gravel snake around some well-pruned groups of shrubbery and across a level stretch of lawn dotted with blue spruces from a nursery and a couple of busy gardeners, to a large substantial gray stone house embellished with all sorts of little odd-ments of turrets and balconies.

"Spirit of 1880, of course," replied Ted, answering the tone of her voice rather than her actual words. He stopped under the porte-cochère before the big front door that was glass down almost to the steps and heavily curtained in cream-colored lace. "I guess we can leave the car here. We won't stay long."

"No," murmured Jill, putting her knee against the cranky door of the Ark and pushing hard. "Don't let's." She felt already oppressed by the stiffness and old-fashioned formality that the house expressed.

The door gave way with its usual abruptness, and she all but plunged headlong out on to the steps. She caught herself, however, and advanced with dignity

to that elegant door, behind which, she was sure, lurked a supercilious butler all ready to jump out at her. He appeared almost at once—Ted called him Gustav and seemed to know him quite well—and ushered them into a reception room to the right of the door.

It was a small parlor, furnished with an ineffectual little fireplace with a marble mantel, a pink satin sofa, and a collection of pink satin chairs with spindly legs, which looked to Jill like nothing so much as a mother hen with a brood of undernourished chicks. She picked out the least breakable-looking of the stiff little chairs and sat down on the edge of it, trying to appear more at ease than she felt.

"I feel," she whispered irrepressibly to Ted, who lounged against the mantelpiece in his favorite attitude with his hands in his pockets, "as if I'd been put in the refrigerator."

Gustav, who had vanished as soon as he had deposited them in the parlor, popped in again to say that Miss Dabney would be down in just a minute.

Looking about her at the lace curtains in the high windows, the pictures which looked as if they might have been bought all at once to match the furniture, at the repoussée silver vases on the mantel, Jill wondered what the girl who belonged to this setting would be like. When it was new, some forty or fifty years ago, it must have been the last word in fashion

—and a very expensive last word, too—and it had now the dignity that a room acquires which has had the courage not to change in a changing age when house decorators revolutionize the styles every year or so and a drawing room gets a new dress almost as often as its mistress. But it was all very unlike the Dabney that Ted had described to them.

Jill had been surprised when Ted had asked her to go with him to invite Dabney to take supper with them the next evening.

"Not Sunday evening supper! *Ted!*" she had protested. "Have her some time when Lura is here and we do things properly!"

But Ted had insisted. "Lura's no ornament to any dining room," he had said, and Jill, laughing, had agreed. It was Lura's custom, when not actually passing things at the table, to stand in the pantry and peer through the glass windows of the swinging door at the assemblage. The Dales were used to it, but it was sometimes startling to guests to look up and see through the glass a black face with great eyes behind spectacles fixed gloweringly on them.

On Sunday evenings, however, Lura was always out, and the Dales supped most informally, each one on what he pleased, where he pleased. Beverley had his customary bowl of bread and milk on the kitchen table, but the rest—which usually included Sally or Twig or Billy when he was at home—wandered where

their fancy listed, with a sandwich in one hand and a cup of something in the other. "Don't touch that glass on the mantelpiece—it's mine," one would say. "Anybody have some of my cheese dreams?" another would offer. "I made too many." Which was all very well for those who knew it of old and loved it, but Dabney, Jill felt, was a different proposition altogether.

"Oh, Dabney won't mind," Ted had said. "She'll like it."

"Of course, ask her by all means," Mrs. Dale had agreed. "We'll love having her. She must get pretty lonely sometimes in that big house with only her grandparents for company—she must want some young life. We'll bring Agnes into the living room and have our sandwiches and cocoa and cake in front of the fire all together. We really were getting too uncivilized, anyhow."

So here were Jill and Ted on Saturday morning to ask Dabney to Sunday evening supper, and Jill, each moment that she sat in the cold, formal, expensive little drawing room, became more and more certain that Dabney never would "fit in."

There was a step on the stairs, and Ted jerked himself up, suddenly alive.

"Hello, Ted, how are you! Is this Jill? I'm ever so glad to see you. Oh, do let's go out on the porch—it's nicer."

Dabney was as unlike the pink satin chairs as possible. She was modern and cordial to her slim finger tips. She wore a tan flannel sports frock, and her brown hair was curly and caught in a tiny knot at the nape of her neck; under her spontaneous friendliness there was a little air of calm assurance that was very attractive.

She led them through a large hall, dark with rugs and heavy, carved furniture, all reflected in mirrors, and out on to the porch, which was really another room, except that three sides of it were of glass through which the sun streamed, blazing on the green of ferns and the flaming rose of some potted azaleas. The wicker furniture was bright with cretonne covers to match the curtains, and there was a victrola in one corner. Jill felt comfortable again.

"Ted, why in time did you and Jill stay in the show case?" (Her irreverent name for her grandmother's Victorian parlor.) "Why didn't you bring her out here and play the victrola? I've got some new records."

"Afraid of Gustav," said Ted easily, winding the victrola and slipping on the record which Dabney handed him. "He seemed to want us there. Besides, young woman, we thought you'd be down in two or three hours."

He closed the shining mahogany doors of the machine, and the waltz came to them softly as from a

distance. Jill thought of their own forlorn old phonograph that scraped and blared and had to be wound in the middle of every record.

"I'm sorry I was so long," apologized Dabney. "I'd only just started to get up when you came."

"Well, look here, haven't you had any breakfast? We shouldn't have come so early!"

It was nearly twelve o'clock. Jill suppressed a smile as she thought how the solicitous Ted had waked her brutally at quarter of seven with the announcement that it was late and was she going to sleep *all* day?

"I had coffee and rolls in bed," said Dabney. "Put the needle about halfway back, Ted, and play that piano part again. I like it, don't you?"

Jill, from the pile of new records which Dabney had dropped in her lap, looked up and delivered the invitation that she had been brought here to give. Dabney promptly accepted.

"There's no use in my pretending to be overcome with surprise," she said with a ripple of a laugh. "I'm not. Ted told me he was going to bring you over to ask me this morning. In fact, I really invited myself about a week ago. I told Ted I wanted to come. It all sounds like such fun. I should think that being one of a big family must be like belonging to a club."

"It's fun," agreed Jill. "There's always plenty to do."

"There are clubs *and* clubs, of course," said Ted.

"Do you remember the kind of club you used to have when you were a kid—all the children in the neighborhood getting together and deciding to have a secret society? Or maybe you didn't live in that kind of a neighborhood. Anyhow, it goes *fine* for about two days. The person who thought of it first is president, and everybody pays in three cents dues, and then about two days later somebody decides it's time to elect a new president, and there's a big row and everybody says they won't play and wants their money back, and the club busts up! Remember, Jill?"

"Yes, there was the W. W. 7, W. W.—whatever that meant. I don't think I ever did know. And then there was the one that those older boys on Peach Tree Road got up and wouldn't let you in because they said you had too big a family, so you disowned us and slept out in the garage for three days until there was a terrific thunderstorm one night—and he got scared, Dabney, and came in!"

They talked a few minutes more, and then, catching each other's eyes, the Dales rose to go.

"Oh, don't go," begged Dabney. "Stay to lunch. Granny's going to be out and I'll be all alone."

"Thanks, I'd like to," said Ted, "but I can't. I've got to meet Twig—worse luck. But Jill can stay."

Jill, not entirely at home yet, demurred also. "I have to take Sue to knock another hole in the family pocketbook—meaning to the dentist. Sally and I are

going to support her when she gets her bands screwed up. Mother doesn't like her to be down town alone."

"Well, I've got a bridge party in town this afternoon. I'll drop you anywhere you say. Do stay," said Dabney persuasively.

So it was arranged that Jill was to meet Sally and Sue "at the eagle" at quarter of three, and Ted went off.

"He's a sweet thing," said Dabney, as the uproar of the departing Ark penetrated even through the thick silence of that luxurious house. "Come upstairs, Jill, I've got some things I have to pack up and send off."

They ran up the long, easily sloping stairs, Dabney a little ahead, busily explaining about those frocks which she had worn so many times that everybody simply groaned when she appeared in them and which, accordingly, she was getting ready to send to a cousin in Connecticut.

Dabney had the "pink room." The bed was of brass, yellow and solid, and the rest of the furniture was of mahogany, but everything else in the room, from silk curtains to the blotting-paper on the desk, was industriously pink. One window opened on to a shallow and useless balcony, and the other three were equipped with a deep window seat from which one could get a lovely view of the long lawn and the gabled roof of a near-by house among the trees.

"Take off your chapeau and sit down wherever it looks comfortable," ordered Dabney. "This business won't take long."

Jill pulled off her green felt hat and tossed it on the bed, ran her fingers through her hair, and settled herself among the cushions on the window seat. She picked out a Parisian rag doll with a pert face and long limp legs from the assortment of such expensive toys on the window seat, and idly tied its arms together while Dabney went to the closet, which was almost as big as the room in which Beverley slept, and pulled down one frock and then another, until there were five lovely colorful things hanging over her arm.

They showed that they had been worn; they were just a little soiled, and there was a spot on the sleeve of the smocked jersey, a pulled place on the drapery of the georgette evening frock. But Jill knew what possibilities they had: a little cleaning, a little pressing, a stitch or two, and there were five new frocks for that lucky cousin! To have such clothes! To have enough to give away!

"Dabney! Dabney! I'm going now, pet!"

It was an old lady's voice, gentle and a little thin.

"Excuse me a minute—I must say good-bye to Granny."

Dabney departed to accompany her grandmother dutifully to her motor. In a few minutes she was back

again, followed by a maid bearing a couple of suit boxes.

"Jeanne," said Dabney in what Jill recognized as French, "*avez-vous* some *papier pour cette* box?"

"Yes, I think so, Mees Dabney. I'll get you some."

As she went out, Dabney turned to Jill and said disgustedly, "That's always the way. When I talk to her in French she answers in English!"

She bent a frock in the middle and stood looking in perplexity at the long sleeves that dangled almost to the floor. Jeanne, returning with a roll of white tissue paper, took the garments and in a few moments made the two suit boxes ready to be tied up and addressed.

"That's done," said Dabney with a long sigh of relief, as if she had labored hard and long. "*Merci*, Jeanne. Let's go down, Jill. Lunch ought to be about ready."

Lunch was a formal and lengthy affair. At this large, round table, Jill, sitting at Dabney's right, was so far away from her that she felt positively lonely, accustomed as she was to the crowded home table and a fraternal elbow in her ribs and fraternal feet edging hers out of the way. The two girls alone were served by the impassive Gustav with as much ceremony as if they had been twenty; from thick mushroom soup to Gruyère cheese, the meal advanced slowly and impressively and—to Jill—oppressively.

"There's a lot to be said for quick-lunch counters,"

observed Dabney, folding a monogrammed napkin as large as a small tablecloth. "Granny likes ten million courses served at about the speed of a state funeral. She had some people here to dinner the other night—no one under seventy—and we had course after course, and they talked about church and politics and things like that, and I got so sleepy I nearly *died!* I thought I just couldn't sit still any longer, and when we reached the salad—I don't know what I was thinking of—I stood up and stretched! Granny was simply horrified. It was dreadful, of course."

Jill laughed joyfully, picturing the formal table and the solemn old people, and Dabney, pretty and young and restless, getting up as unself-consciously as if she were all alone and stretching her cramped limbs!

After lunch Dabney dressed hastily for her party, while Jill sat on the window seat and offered advice when asked on the choice of frock, hat, and handkerchief. She began to be nervous as the minutes passed and the little square clock on the chiffonier tinkled the quarter-hours; she had visions of Sue and Sally waiting for her impatiently, but at last Dabney was ready. The chauffeur was waiting to help them into the long black limousine under the porte-cochère.

They whirled around the corners of the various quaintly named "lanes" of the newer developments, where the houses, long and low and new, had almost

all figured in various architectural and decorative magazines, and swung into the old avenue that had once been a city line, and that led up and down a succession of steep, short hills directly to the park and its drive. Along the winding road beside the river they could make time, and the various park guards in their gray uniforms stationed here and there recognized Dabney and saluted as she bowled past at thirty-five miles an hour.

Jill loved the river, placid and twisting and pale, on this early spring day of thin sunshine. She loved the bridges that arched over it, the long island that lay close to its opposite bank, the occasional racing shells, narrow and swift, that would seem for a moment to keep abreast of the car and then would drop behind.

It was not long before they were in the heavy traffic of the city, moving down Chestnut Street with swift short rushes and long waits. Dabney told John through the speaking tube where to stop, and he drew up at the curb just long enough for Jill to hop out.

"Don't forget to-morrow," she said, still hanging on to the door of the car, while a roadster behind honked impatiently. And, "I enjoyed having lunch with you," she called after Dabney, as John shut the door, and the car wormed its way back into the traffic and was swallowed up before it had reached

the corner. Jill turned, walked into a large woman in a red hat, apologized breathlessly—the woman by sheer power of weight having so much the better of the encounter—and, watching her chance, darted into the revolving door of the big department store where she was to meet the other two girls.

It was just quarter of three, after all, and so she stopped for just a second to look at the cases in the Oriental shop where were the things that were most fascinating to Jill: squat little Buddhas cut out of crystal, long, frosty strings of rose quartz, greenish-gray carved pendants of agate, jade earrings. Jill could never go past these cases without pausing to feast on the beauty spread out there.

When she tore herself away and hurried to the huge bronze eagle in the center of the store which was the habitual meeting place for half of Philadelphia, she found Sally and Susan already there, hanging over the glass top of the nearest counter, generously presenting each other with the most elaborate and expensive of the pieces of neckwear assembled there. Jill slipped up behind them.

"I'll give you that Lord Fauntleroy collar for your fiftieth birthday, Sue," Sally promised.

Sally Scott was Jill's "best friend." They lived within a quarter of a mile of each other on the Pike, they were in the same class at school, and out of school hours they were in and out of each other's

houses most of the time. Sally, with her dark hair and clear olive skin, was a decided contrast to fair Jill; she was not so pretty as Jill, but there was character in her square little face and her keen eyes, and she had immense funds of enthusiasm and loyalty.

The three girls made their way out on to the street in the stream of Saturday-afternoon shoppers, talking jerkily as they broke apart to go around a slow fat woman who was making as good time, Jill said, as a cow in a pasture, or to scuttle across the street just before the traffic signal changed, and interrupting themselves to pause for just a minute to look at something particularly pretty or bizarre in a shop window. The dentist had his office on the eighth floor of a tall building. His waiting room was furnished with deep, soft leather chairs. The three settled down, and Susan dived at once into a year-old copy of the London *Times* pictorial section, searching for pictures of the Prince of Wales.

In a few moments the white-uniformed nurse appeared, spoke pleasantly to Susan, and said that the doctor would be ready soon. And presently the dentist himself came to the door of his office, wiping clean pink hands on a towel, and beaming the deceptively reassuring smile of his profession. Susan dropped her hat in Jill's lap and marched into the torture chamber.

Jill, sitting by the window, looked out over the

black and gray roofs of the city. Here and there a skyscraper rose through smoke and city mist; at the eastern edge the river was a dim silver strip, with the steel loops of the big bridge gleaming in the sunshine.

"You know, Sally," said Jill suddenly—they were alone in the room—"the people who are really poor have a lot of advantages over the people who are only half poor, like us. We spend so much money on good schools and good dentists and all that kind of thing that the really poor get given to them free. Why, we spend practically all we've got just reaching the point where they begin, and then there's nothing left over for cream. And I like cream."

"Whipped cream!" said Sally teasingly, "—with a cherry on top!"

"That's over," said Sue, reappearing. "Ready? Let's go down Walnut Street and window shop."

It was a favorite diversion. From the windows of the little shops along the way each one would select all the elements of a costume—sometimes a traveling rig, sometimes a party get-up, sometimes the ideal school costume—complete down to smallest details of handbag, handkerchief, and jewelry.

"All right," said Jill. "I'm going to buy a trousseau to take to West Point. Only let's go through Rittenhouse Square first."

The gray spire of Holy Trinity Church pricked into

the pale spring sky; the shadows of the still bare limbs of the buttonwood trees fell lightly over the wide asphalt paths that crossed the square. Billy the goat, in his eternal bronze prance, shone like gold where countless mittened hands had caressed him. There were children, tricycles, nurses everywhere.

At one corner a man was selling flowers. He had a little stand—one of the many flower stands that make interesting the streets of Philadelphia—and he had violets, and tight bunches of arbutus that had been brought up from the South. The rough green leaves had been broken away, and the tiny pink and white flowers were crushed together, all the more fragrant for being a little bruised. Jill hesitated long. She wanted some of the arbutus; it was so springy, so sweet, so woodsy. But the little bunches were seventy-five cents, and the violets were only a quarter. Even that was an extravagance. But she bought one of the little bunches of violets, fragrant and sweet and dark, with their short stems wound in tin foil and a rusty violet-headed pin spiked through them, and she pinned them in the front of her green coat.

They had to hurry to catch their train at Broad Street Station, because they took so long deciding on exactly the kind of fitted suitcase that they would take to West Point. They just squeezed through the gates in time, and the suburban train was crowded. They all three found seats, but not together. Jill per-

suaded a sour-looking woman to move her packages enough to allow her to slip into one quarter of the seat.

The train pulled out past the tall buildings and through the engine yards where tracks crisscrossed endlessly and big black engines sat and panted and puffed. The long rays of the sunset turned the clouds of smoke and steam into shifting masses of orchid and mauve and pale apricot. Jill, quick to see beauty in unlikely places, watched it as long as there was a trace of pink left. Then she settled back, lulled by the steady click of wheels on rails, and pieced together all the conflicting impressions of the day: Dabney, the thick, expensive luxury of the Bairds' house, the heavy silver and spindly chairs, the cut-class flower holder in the limousine, the worn place in the lining of her coat that would have to be patched, window shopping. . . .

Ted was waiting at the station with the Ark.

"Mother said to bring you back for supper, Sally," he said. "Twig is there. I don't know whether you'll get anything to eat or not——"

"I made a black walnut cake this morning," interpolated Sue.

"—But be a sport and take a chance on it, anyhow!"

It was dark by the time they turned into the driveway of Tangle Garden, and the lights of the old house

were streaming out over the lawn. The phonograph blared—and stuck.

Randy's voice called, "Wind it, Twig, will you?"

In the dining room, where the light was on and the blinds had not been drawn, Mrs. Dale moved about doing something to the table.

Jill got out of the car feeling a little tug at her heart, a little tug that seemed somehow to ease the strain of wistfulness and frustration that she had been struggling with all day.

CHAPTER V

THE FORTUNE

JILL wrapped the big pile of sandwiches in a damp napkin and weighted it down with a plate before she took off her apron and hung it on a hook behind the door. Everything was ready now. She leaned over to give a corrective jerk to her stocking—familiar gesture, for Jill's stockings seemed never to be firmly anchored—and then, straightening up, took the plate of scraps and crumbs and crusts and started out to the feeding platform which Randy had rigged up for the birds on the lawn by the creek.

The day was sunny and almost warm. A constant stream of Sunday motorists flowed up and down the Pike, tooting their horns and squeaking their brakes. On the lawn robins tussled with long, obstinate worms and English sparrows squabbled and chittered in the ivy that covered the old gray-stone house.

Jill sprinkled her crumbs on the wooden tray that was built well above the reach of chance cats. It had been fun during the winter to watch the birds come to their "free-lunch counter": chickadees and wrens

and juncoes, a brilliant cardinal and his wife, and of course always the common, noisy little English sparrows. But spring was here now, and the birds would be finding food for themselves.

Susan, yawning, came to join Jill.

"How *long* Sunday is with Dad away!" she sighed. "When do you suppose he'll get back, Jill?"

"I don't know. I thought he'd be home yesterday. But Mother doesn't seem to be the least bit worried, so I guess everything's all right. Where is everybody?"

"Mother's resting, and the boys are working on the Ark, and Bev is drawing pictures of airplanes all over your new tablet. I gave it to him to keep him quiet."

Arm in arm they wandered down to the edge of the creek, where they dropped pebbles and bits of twig into the placid surface of the swimming hole and walked out on to the end of the springboard and discussed the technique of the swan dive. Then they skirted around the spring house, a beloved haunt. They are all over old Pennsylvania, those little stone houses, built into the slope of the lawns so that on one side the roof just shows above the grass, and on the other, where the ground falls away, there is a low door and a wall of whitewashed stone. Inside, on hot summer days, they are dark and cool with the thin trickle of the spring down in the heart of them.

The two girls drifted back to the house through the old-fashioned garden, where little paths wound be-

tween the low boards that confined the exuberant tangled beds, where the rose bushes were still tied up in their winter straw, where daffodils and tulips were beginning to push slim green fingers through the brown earth. The sun was going down, and it turned the windows all along the west side of the gray house into blazing gold.

With a rattle and bang and a few snorts the Ark came charging down the driveway and dropped Randy off at the porch.

"Ted's going for Dabney," he said, wiping his grease-blackened hands on his trousers. "Are you sure you made enough sandwiches?"

The lights were lit and a bright little fire was crackling and snapping in the living-room fireplace when Dabney arrived. All the family were assembled to receive her, from Mrs. Dale down to Beverley, an unwontedly solemn Beverley in a starched white sailor suit. Ted helped her out of her fur coat, and Jill did the honors.

"Mother, this is Dabney. And Dabney, these are us. The two handsomest and most intelligent you already know, but this is Randy, and this is Susan, and this—come on and make your bow, Bev—is our pin basket, Beverley."

Beverley, unsmiling, put one chubby hand behind him, planted the other squarely upon his stomach, and bowed low. Dabney was enchanted.

"What did you call him—pin basket?" she said curiously.

Mrs. Dale explained. "I don't suppose you've heard that expression before. Where I grew up anything that was particularly precious and fine was a pin basket. So Bev, being the baby, and rather nice, is ours. That's enough, dear," she broke off to say to Bev, who, charmed with his success, was continuing to bow, solemnly and impressively.

Beverley, having met the "company" and greeted her politely, disappeared and was seen no more that evening. What wiles and bribery accomplished this early and orderly retirement only Jill could have told.

"This fire's so nice," said Dabney. "Oh, may I look at your pictures?"

There was a row of photographs across the mantel, photographs which had not been there when Jill and Susan put the last touches on the living room. Jill leaned over Dabney's shoulder and inspected the gallery with growing horror. All the family, in their most unbecoming and most undignified aspects, were there displayed, in aged snapshots and photographs long ago relegated to the "picture collection" in the attic. There was only one member of the family who had the perverted sense of humor that would allow of such treachery—and only one member whose countenance was missing from that rogue's gallery. Jill's eyes sought Randy accusingly, and surprised upon his

face an expression of unholy joy. She followed the direction of his glance, and saw Ted, scarlet with wrath, glowering at the picture at the moment in Dabney's slender fingers.

It represented the crown prince of the house of Dale, a curly-headed year-old cherub, prone upon his stomach with his heels in the air, clad with the marked scantiness that at one time was considered quite *chic* for infant portraits. How dreadful of Randy!

A wicked gleam came into Jill's own eyes.

"Cunning, isn't it?" she said serenely. And reaching out a slim and flexible ankle behind Dabney, she hooked it meaningly around Randy's stalwart one, and went on firmly, "You'd never think, to look at him now, that *Randy* was ever as fat and sweet as that, would you?"

"Is that Randy?" said Dabney, as she put the photograph back on the mantel. "How darling!"

Randy choked with surprise and indignation, then grinned.

"Did you see the one of Jill at the age of ten?" he inquired, in a last game effort, but Ted, whose gratitude was of a practical nature, had quietly pocketed that one.

Dabney wanted to help get supper. There was only the cocoa to make, for the sandwiches, of the three most succulent varieties in the Dale repertoire, were all ready, the cream had been whipped, and Susan's

beautiful cake had only to be cut. But it is strange how five people can get in one another's way in making a pot of cocoa. Susan mixed it, Dabney stirred it, Ted poured it into the big china pot which Jill had first heated with boiling water, and Randy came for it with Agnes, who was already loaded with china and food.

"'Much beer in little kegs, many dozen hard-boiled eggs,'" he chanted—a gem which came originally from "Bab ballads" and had long since been adopted as the Dales' picnic war cry.

Agnes ahead, pushed ceremoniously by Randy, and the others following after like attendant high priests, the procession advanced into the living room. Behind it, the big kitchen bore evidences of the struggle: a ring of milk on the table where the milk bottle had stood, a trail of sugar across the floor, a tea kettle in the sink, its lid on the cupboard shelf, the cocoa pan on the windowsill with its handle in a pink geranium, three gingham aprons in a heap over Lura's rocking chair.

They drew the easy chairs up to the fire and put Agnes in the center where everybody could reach her. Randy and Susan settled down, by preference, upon the floor on cushions. The fire glowed, and the candles on the mantelpiece shed a soft golden light. The sense of peace and happiness that somehow always pervaded the Dale gatherings slipped quietly in. Jill drew

a long breath. How silly to have thought that Dabney wouldn't fit in!

"I hope nobody is counting the number of sandwiches I'm eating," said Dabney, reaching for another one.

"We don't want any left over," Ted said emphatically, and bent to the noble task of helping to finish them up.

Jill leaned back in her chair and looked dreamily over her cup at her mother. She was lovely to-night in the soft candlelight and the shadows, turning her deep blue eyes so often to the little old mahogany clock on the mantel with the gilt eagle above its square face and the gaudy picture of Faneuil Hall below. The girl guessed that she was wondering about Dad—why *didn't* he come?

"Lura has a boy friend," announced Susan pensively.

"Yes, he came for her this afternoon in a car—a heap better-looking one than ours, too! Lots of shiny blue paint and a sort of tin Venus de Milo on the radiator cap!"

Mrs. Dale shook her head. "He's been here before. I hope he isn't after her for her money. She's saved quite a little. Poor Lura!"

"She must know he's not bowled over by her beauty," said Ted. "You ought to see her, Dabney. She's about fifty, and she wears big goggles, and a

bandana handkerchief around her head, with an old straw hat on top of it."

"What startles me," laughed Jill, rising to wheel Agnes and the supper débris out of the way, "is the idea that anyone even remotely connected with the Dales should be courted for her money!"

Through the silence of the evening came the far-away long-drawn whistle of a train across the meadows.

"Doesn't that sound like summer and going away!" said Dabney. "It makes me want to get on a train and settle back with a magazine, and know that I'll be on it for a long time."

"Where are you going this summer?" inquired Susan.

"We have a cottage at Cape May. I suppose we'll go back there for part of the time."

"Ted's going abroad, if he can get a job on a ship," volunteered Randy, "and I'm going to work for some surveyors."

"And the rest of us will just stay here, and swim, and sit on the spring-house roof and sing," said Jill. "Remember how nice it used to be, with the moon in the beech tree, and all the crowd on the spring-house roof, and sometimes a whippoorwill far away in the woods somewhere?"

Susan, never still very long, scrambled to her feet. "Let's sing now. You play, Dabney, don't you?"

She switched on the electric lights, and all the soft shadows fled away and the candles looked dim and silly.

The old upright piano had lasted through two generations of earnest, youthful pounding; its keys were yellowed and, some of them, broken; its voice was thin and tinkly. Oh, for a baby grand, thought Jill, watching Dabney's sapphire ring wink as it wandered up and down the battered keys, coaxing forth a tinkling "Swanee Ribber."

"Sing!" Dabney nodded at her.

> "All up and down de whole creation,
> Sadly I roam."

Jill added her soft, creamy contralto to Susan's clear soprano, Ted's doubtful baritone, Dabney's sweet nondescript little trill, and Randy's frank bellow.

> "Still longing for de old plantation,
> And for de old folks at home."

"It needs tuning," said Susan charitably, when the last ho-o-o-ome had died to the final chord.

"It needs to be a new piano," said Jill bluntly.

Randy grinned. "This is the way you sing that song," he said. "Listen." He lifted his voice and forcibly removed Susan's hands from her ears in order

that she might have the full benefit of his wit. "Listen, Sue, this is the way Jill sings it:

> "All up and down the old plantation,
> Sadly I roam,
> Still longing for the *whole creation* . . ."

Jill smiled mechanically. She was listening. She had heard the trolley whistle at the crossroad, and in a moment, if her father was on it, there would be a step on the porch. The step came, followed by the sound of a key in the lock of the front door. Randy and Susan flew to open it.

Mr. Dale came in, plainly tired, but with a gleam in his eye, and was immediately surrounded. He paused for a moment, speaking to Dabney and answering questions, and then he started upstairs, whither Mrs. Dale had slipped away some time before.

"There's some candy in my bag," he called back over the banisters. "You young ones can amuse yourselves with that."

It proved to be a big round box of the candied fruit which they all loved and which was considered too expensive a luxury for any time but Christmas.

"Mr. Speaker, I smell a rat," declaimed Randy through a mouthful of candied lime, "I see him floating in the air, but mark me, sir, I will——"

"Oh, Randy, can that hackneyed old thing," inter-

rupted Susan disgustedly. "Dabney, you said you could read palms. Will you do mine now?"

"I really have to go," objected Dabney. "But, here, stick it out and I'll tell you something."

Susan neatly abstracted Randy's handkerchief, which matched his socks and plainly was not intended for use, and wiped her sticky fingers before she presented her hand to Dabney's professional gaze.

Dabney, taking it gently between her own, and cupping the palm to the light, said slowly, "You are very reserved. (Susan, who was noted for telling everything she knew, glanced triumphantly at Randy.) You are lucky; you're going to live to be very old, with one serious illness when you are eighty-five, which you will survive; you will be married three times, and you're going to have a lot of money. There, honey, I've really got to go!"

"'What? so far? so early? so soon?'" said Jill, quoting from her beloved *Rootabaga Stories*.

But Dabney was firm, and so Ted went to get her coat. Under their polite protests, all four of the Dales were seething with eagerness to know what it was that brought their father home with candied fruit in his bag and a gleam in his eye.

"Want to come with us, you kids?" Ted offered, and after a moment's hesitation, Jill and Randy accepted.

Jill, when she ran upstairs for a wrap, paused in

the doorway of the room where her parents were talking earnestly.

"We're going to take Dabney home," she said.

"All right, but come directly back." And, as Jill waited to see if they would say anything illuminating, Mrs. Dale added, "Run along, dear, don't keep them waiting."

Well, Jill decided, as she and Randy stowed themselves in the back of the Ark, whatever it was, it was surely something pleasant, and probably, she told herself severely, to down certain wild and irrational hopes that had their source in her fervid imagination, something quite tame and usual.

They swung out under the big black trees on to the smooth Pike.

"Let's sing!" said Randy, lolling on the seat beside Jill.

"All we like sheep have gone astray," Jill began, and—

"Baa, baa, baa," the others took it up.

When they returned, after putting the car away, they found lights in the kitchen.

"We'll go in through the back door," said Ted.

Mr. Dale, boyishly elated, was sitting on the table, with a glass of milk in his hand, while Mrs. Dale, smiling and flushed and a little troubled, leaned against his shoulder. Susan, dancing with excitement, forthwith dispensed the news.

"It's a f-f-fortune!" she cried, stuttering in her eagerness, "it—it's really a f-fortune. Dad's got a whole lot of money! We're *rich!*"

"My aunt's cat's pants!" said Randy slowly.

Ted was staggered into speechlessness.

"Wasn't it funny how Dabney *said* . . ." Susan babbled on.

Jill reached for the sink for support. "Melodram!" she said, awed.

CHAPTER VI

TALKING IT OVER

"MOTHER, is it true?" demanded Randy. "Or have Sue's misfortunes turned her mind at last?"

"It's *true!*" maintained Susan doggedly. "Isn't it, Dad?"

Ted had an ordered, logical mind. He made gestures in the air with his right hand, as if to sweep away everything extraneous.

"Now, let's get this straight," he begged. "Pipe down, Sue, and let Dad tell us about it. Let's get it straight!"

"Well, but let's go into the living room first," said Jill, who had no love for the kitchen.

Accordingly they adjourned to the living room, where the dying fire was kicked and poked and coaxed into bursting out afresh, and everyone settled down, a little solemn and breathless, to hear all about this amazing stroke of fortune which had befallen the Dales.

"Dad, *where* did it come from?" said Jill, sinking

with a gracious smile into the easy chair which Randy was drawing out for himself.

Mr. Dale crossed his legs and reached for his pipe before he began. "I don't know whether you've heard me say much about my old friend Ted Allen or not—our Ted was named after him. A number of years ago, he got into financial difficulties and turned to me as his closest friend—he had no relatives—to help him out." Mr. Dale spoke slowly between puffs, and four pairs of eyes were fixed unwaveringly upon his. The fifth pair, Mrs. Dale's, was watching the play of expression on the faces of her family. "I had a few thousands which I had inherited from your grandfather, and I gladly let Allen have them. He died before he was able to repay the money, and he left me in his will a great many shares of Amalgamated Gutta Percha. They were worthless at the time, but Ted always hoped and believed that they would become valuable."

"When was all this, Dad?" put in Ted, when one of the pauses grew particularly long.

"Oh, it all happened before any of you had come along, before I had even met your mother, in fact, and I crossed it out of my mind as a total loss and let it go at that. I admit, though, I've often thought since how useful that money would have been in providing some of the things I've wanted you all to have. The stock never paid dividends, and time and again I've

been on the point of throwing it away as so much waste paper."

"Suppose you had!" murmured Susan.

"For his sake, I never did—fortunately. But now conditions have changed, and there's an immense demand for gutta percha for use in the manufacture of airplanes, and the stock has suddenly become valuable. I sold it yesterday for a great deal of money."

"Well, but how much do you mean by a great deal of money?" Ted had known days when a simple request for funds was met by the reply that fifty dollars was "a great deal of money." "A million?"

"Very close to it, my boy," said Mr. Dale quietly.

"Whew!"

"It sounds like a fairy tale, or a dime novel," said Jill. "'From Poorhouse to Palace; Or How a Good Deed Brought Its Own Reward.' My poor brain just can't take it in. Dad, could you let me have two dollars right now for some new stockings? That might help me a little to absorb it."

"Oh, your poor brain will absorb it like blotting paper when once it gets started," prophesied Randy.

But Jill was serious. It was a stupendous thing to grasp, that they, the Dales, always on the ragged edge, were suddenly swimming in money!

"If you don't want that two dollars, I'll take it," said Randy, and Jill, coming out of her brown study,

stretched out her hand for the bills which her father was offering her.

The new fortune having proved itself to the extent of two dollars for stockings, other similar demands poured in and were satisfied.

"Have you got the whole million in your pocket, Dad?" inquired Sue respectfully.

Mrs. Dale rose. "Come on, chickens, it's time for bed."

The suggestion met with a howl. Go to bed, when there was a brand-new fortune almost entirely undiscussed! Impossible!

"Oh, let them have a little while longer, Margaret!" said Mr. Dale. "This doesn't happen every day!"

"But they have to get up and go to school tomorrow just the same," his wife objected feebly, but she allowed herself to be drawn down on the sofa again.

"Now," announced Susan, "we can have a new piano."

"And a new car!" from Ted.

"But then—" Jill bounced up, "—oh, I hadn't thought of this! We can go to West Point!"

"Why not five new cars?" said Randy satirically. "One for each of us."

"You're too young, of course, but Jill and I really ought to have a roadster to go about in."

"No," said Mr. Dale definitely. "We'll have a new

car for all the family, and a coupé of some kind for your mother to drive, but I'm not going to have you and Jill flying over the country in high-powered roadsters. That's flat."

"Squelched," said Jill with a chuckle. "Next!"

"Dad, how soon do you suppose I could go abroad to study singing? A great singer doesn't have to finish school——"

"You go abroad to study singing! Rave on, little one!" said Randy.

"Mother, we will go to West Point, won't we?"

"If I had a motor bike I could ride to school every day!"

Jill raised her voice above the hubbub. "I know what let's do! Do be quiet, everybody! Let's fix up the house. Everybody take turns suggesting something. Mother, you begin."

This was a favorite Dale amusement; they were forever planning trips to Europe or the disbursement of fortunes or the furnishing of the ideal house. The knowledge of real funds added immeasurable zest to the game.

"The cellar door needs mending," said Mrs. Dale promptly. "And then I'd have the old fireplace to the parlor restored, and all the woodwork, outside and in, painted."

"Dad?"

"Build a wing out toward the garden, with a big

living room downstairs and a terrace, and a couple of bedrooms upstairs."

"Wouldn't that be heavenly," said Jill. "Imagine a terrace—afternoon tea and things. What would you do, Ted?"

"Lay hardwood floors to dance on."

There was a chorus of disapproval.

"Never take up the broad floor boards, Teddy dear," exclaimed Mrs. Dale. "There are so few houses left with the old, wide boards. It would be criminal to destroy them!"

"We'll dance in Dad's wing. Your idea is n.g., my son. You lose your turn. Sue?"

"Build a big bay window out from the living room and have a grand piano in it."

"Randy?"

"New furnace," said Randy the practical, and was applauded by the entire family.

"I'd clear out all the funny, junky furniture we've got," said Jill, "and get some antiques to go with our lovely old things."

"Yes, I can just see what you'll do to the house, too," said Randy indignantly. "You'll furnish it all up according to a book, so that there's nothing in the room that's not just the right period. These early American period things make me sick. There's no comfortable place to sit down, and they're always so chaste and stiff they make me feel as if my finger

nails were dirty and I hadn't washed behind my ears!"

"Perhaps they are and you didn't," replied Jill serenely. "They never make me feel that way."

"Nobody mentioned the broken step on the back porch," said Mrs. Dale. "I was so hoping one of you would remember it. And the old refrigerator—we really need a new one—and the swinging door that sticks, and—— What are you bad children laughing at?"

"The window in the entry that Beverley broke, the dent on the fender of the Ark," chanted Ted rhythmically.

"The rug with the ink spot, the broken victrola," Jill took it up, "the hole in the matting in our room upstairs—go on, Ran, I've given out."

"The dishes and glasses so varied and chipped, the wall paper which from its moorings has ripped—go on, Sue."

"The piano," began that young woman of one idea, and was promptly sat upon.

"You've mentioned that before—twice."

"I hadn't realized how shabby things had become," said Mr. Dale thoughtfully.

"Oh, my dear, I had," sighed Mrs. Dale. "But what can you expect with five children to bring up and dress and educate?"

"Why," he went on, "to put it into really good

condition we'll have to do it all over. It will be practically a new house."

Ted, from his stand by the fireplace, lifted his voice. "Of course you can do it all over and put in wings and fireplaces and laundry chutes and all that," he said, "but it will still be the same house and still in the same place. What this family really needs is a new, modern house nearer town."

"Oh!" squealed Susan, "with a conservatory and a music room! Oh, Dad, please!"

"With everything just exactly right!" cried Jill. "Wouldn't it be glorious to start out with everything new at once!"

"Children, children," implored Mrs. Dale, "do keep your voices down. You sound so shrill and excited."

"We are excited," said Jill frankly. "It's the most exciting thing I know of to have a whole fortune land on you right out of the blue!"

"Mother, dear, would you mind if we stopped for a moment and just shouted?" proposed Susan. "I think we'd all feel better to get it out of our systems."

She flung herself on the piano stool and thumped out a few chords. "Sing, everybody!"

"Glory, glory, hallelujah!" howled the Dales triumphantly. "Glory, glory hallelujah, Glory, glory hallelujah! We have some shekels now!"

The last line was Ted's invention. They sang it

again, so that everyone could come in on it, and then broke down and laughed.

They laughed till they were helpless: Mr. and Mrs. Dale side by side on the patched sofa; Susan dripping tears of mirth over the broken piano stool; Ted propping his heaving shoulders against the mantel; Randy writhing in one easy chair, and Jill limp in another.

Mrs. Dale recovered herself first.

"Of course we're all stark, raving crazy!" she said, wiping her eyes. "I'm glad we have no near neighbors!"

"It—it is f-funny," moaned Jill.

Mr. Dale took advantage of the momentary lull. "Well, it's late now," he said with finality. "So off to bed, every last one of you. No more palavering. *Git!*"

It was impossible to go to bed without any further "palavering." Inevitably a pajama party assembled in the girls' room.

"I just came to leave this little gem of thought with you," said Ted, presenting himself at the door. "If we do move, don't you think one of those new streets in Chestnut Hill would be the thing?"

"And I just came to say," Randy added his ruffled red head to the conference, "if we move—*I don't.* You're not going to get me out of this house into one of those la-de-da wop villas in Chestnut Hill. So that's that."

The other three exchanged glances. Randy had one of his notions.

"I suppose you mean Italian villas," said Jill.

To tell the truth, she had yearnings toward an Italian villa: something long and low, of pinkish plaster with a red-tiled roof, set upon the brow of a hill with the blue sky behind it and a row of gray-green Lombardy poplars beside it.

Mrs. Dale, in a blue kimono, with her cloudy dark hair soft about her face, came to the door. She looked tired.

"I know it's all most exciting and you want to talk," she said, "but you really must go to bed now. It's after twelve. Go along, boys, at once, please."

She kissed them all, and Susan pulled her down on her bed for a last hug. "Isn't it great?" she said.

"Yes, it is," Mrs. Dale replied soberly. "But remember, all of you, that it takes much more character to stand sudden wealth than it does to stand sudden poverty. Unexpected poverty is infinitely harder to bear, of course, but it brings out the best that is in us; it steadies us; while unexpected wealth makes us more apt to forget ourselves, to lose our heads."

"Why, Mother," said Susan, a little indignantly, "do you think we're going to get purse-proud and snooty?"

"Oh, no"—quickly—"I know you too well for

that. It goes deeper than that, anyhow; it's a question of preserving your sense of balance."

"I see what you mean," said Jill. "We mustn't rush off and buy gold door knobs just because we could! But, all the same, it will be nice not to have to skimp!"

Mrs. Dale smiled and said as she left them, "Now, hurry, darlings, and get into bed—and don't talk any more. Good-night!"

Jill went to open the windows, tripping over the torn place in the matting. The shade as she raised it crashed down upon her head, one of the little infirmities to which its years, which numbered more than Jill's, entitled it. She struggled for a moment to fix it, and then, yielding to Susan's sleepy pleas, left it for the next day. She took off her faded cotton kimono, stood for a moment revealed in neatly patched pajamas, a slim figure with a crown of wavy golden hair, and then plunged into bed, where she poked her toe through a hole in the top sheet in settling down.

She was tired, she found, so tired that her bones ached, but she was filled with a vast satisfaction.

"Oh, Sue," she murmured, "isn't it glorious to be rich!"

CHAPTER VII

SHOPPING

FOR a young lady who frequently and vehemently declared that her idea of luxury was never to have to ride in street cars and never to carry packages, Jill, late on the Saturday afternoon after the fortune had descended upon the Dales, presented a strange appearance. She was standing in the pelting rain, waiting for the big interurban trolley that ran along the Pike, and she was hung all over like a Christmas tree with parcels that were looped over her fingers, squeezed in her hands, suspended from her wrists, tucked under her arms. While the rain dripped from the brim of her green hat, which was obviously old, on to her up-turned nose, and glistened in the gold tendrils curling tightly against her cheeks, and ran in rivers down her green raincoat, which was obviously new, she took an inventory of her impedimenta. The suit box over one wrist, the hat box over the other, the candy under the right arm, the book under the left, a handbag of green leather rustling with newness, innumerable flat paper bags with stiff loops through which she could poke a

finger, a square box wrapped in the crisp pale blue paper affected by jewelry departments—she counted them all and found that one treasure was missing.

"I've lost my gloves!" she wailed.

"They cost seven dollars, too!" said Susan, and searched anxiously among her own bundles and boxes.

Sally regretfully waved her own dress box and shoe box to show that she had no seven-dollar gray suède gloves concealed about her person.

"Here's the trolley. Hop on, girls, quickly," urged Mrs. Dale. "I have your gloves, Jill. You dropped them in Broad Street Station."

At the outset of this shopping expedition Mrs. Dale had declined flatly to carry any parcels, but having yielded so far as to salvage those that the girls dropped, she found herself at the end of what was to her an age-long day with an armful of small packages.

The four took their places in the car upon two hard wooden cross-seats, settling down gently in order not to disturb their careful arrangement of packages or jar their weary bodies. The trolley swayed and lurched till the streaked windows rattled and the straps banged against the sides. It smelled drearily of wet wool, wet varnish, wet rubber raincoats.

"I suppose, when we found there wasn't a taxi at

the station, we could have telephoned Ted to bring the Ark," said Sue.

"We might have tried," agreed Mrs. Dale, "but I doubt if they're home yet."

While Mrs. Dale and the girls had gone shopping, Mr. Dale and the boys had been investigating the matter of new cars.

"Oh, well," said Jill over her shoulder, "I can stand 'most anything in a good cause. This time two weeks from now!"

Whereupon she and Sally squeezed each other's fingers ecstatically, and one pair of silver slippers, three pairs of silk stockings, a green and blue batik scarf, and a bottle of expensive talcum cascaded to the floor.

In two weeks they were going to West Point, driving in the new car that was to be bought, and wearing the gorgeous new raiment of to-day's purchase. Since the taxes on the Scotts' little house fell due, and the roof had sprung a leak, and the rain, coming in, had ruined the living-room wall paper, Sally had perforce planned to make her old pale blue georgette evening dress do. But Jill, who understood all these calamities—oh, so well—had found that the new fortune provided the very real pleasure of giving, and so Sally, too, had gone shopping, and was carrying home an evening frock and a pair of dance slippers.

At the approach of the familiar crossroads, Jill

put her forefinger firmly on the bell by the window, and the four bundle-laden ones heaved themselves up with a weary sigh and swayed to the front platform. Through the gray rain they saw the warm and friendly lights of home. They splashed across the Pike and paddled up the long path in single file like a procession of well-behaved ducks.

Randy and Ted, who had been home for some time, met them at the front door.

"Holy smoke!" said Randy. "Hire a wheelbarrow!"

"Why in time didn't you have them sent?" inquired Ted, who had a lively sense of what was proper.

"Because," explained Jill calmly, unloading her packages into his arms, "if we had they wouldn't have come till Monday, and I expect to spend this evening and all to-morrow gloating."

Mr. Dale turned to his wife. "How do they do it?" he said respectfully.

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Mrs. Dale, sinking into the nearest chair. "But if ever again I allow myself to be made a party to such an orgy of buying, you may take it that I've lost my mind and lead me gently to the nearest padded cell."

"Poor Mums," said Jill, leaning over to kiss her cheek.

"We were the first people in Wannie's," said Sue complacently.

"Where did you have lunch?" asked Randy from the stairs, where he had draped himself over the newel post.

"At the Bellevue. We had soup—lobster bisque—and chicken à la king, and lettuce with Russian dressing, and ice cream."

"And crackers and Camembert cheese," added Sally.

"I fully expect to have a hospital on my hands tomorrow," said Mrs. Dale. "But it was their day, and I let them do what they wanted. One can only be sixteen—and fourteen—once in one's life, and so I held my breath and let them go to it. Jill dear, where is that novel? I believe I'll take a little nap before dinner."

Jill handed over the book which she had insisted on buying just because she had so often envied the wealth that could casually stop in a bookstore and pick up something light and trashy for week-end reading. A new book in the Dale family had always been a matter for earnest thought, and if it did not fill a long-felt want or prove a permanent addition to their library, it was considered an indefensible extravagance.

The war whoop that was Beverley's latest accomplishment was heard upstairs, and a second later the Dale "pin basket" himself flashed down the banister and catapulted into Randy. Saved from destruction

by his father's quick hand, he hurled himself upon his mother.

"Ted, you poor lamb!" Jill suddenly became aware of her brother, who was standing with his arms full of the packages she and Susan had piled upon him, and his face adorned with an exaggeratedly long-suffering expression. "Come on upstairs, everybody, and let's open up our stuff. And, oh, *Ted*, I forgot! What about cars?"

They all trooped up the stairs, talking excitedly.

"Red," Randy was saying, "and long and low, with a French horn on the side—only fifteen dollars extra."

"Only fifteen dollars extra! Let's have several!" This from Susan, whose satiric touch was a little heavy as yet.

"Red?" questioned Mrs. Dale doubtfully.

"Oh, that's the one for us kids," said Ted indistinctly, over the pile of packages which he was steadying with his chin. "There's a big dark blue sedan—seven-seater—for the whole family, and a peach of a little tan coupé for you, Mother. They're going to bring them all out here on Monday so that everybody can see them and ride in them before we decide finally."

"A car for the children! Jack!" said Mrs. Dale reproachfully. "I thought there was to be positively no tearing about the country in high-powered roadsters!"

"This isn't a high-powered roadster, dear," explained Mr. Dale; "it's a light six touring car. They've always had the Ark when I wasn't using it, but it's so decrepit that it really isn't safe. Neither of the other cars is exactly suitable. Of course, it isn't bought yet, and if you'd rather they didn't have it ——"

All of the young people, except Beverley, who was busy going upstairs backward, sitting down, and Sally, who tactfully averted her eyes from this family crisis, stopped where they stood and waited breathlessly for Mrs. Dale's reply.

"Oh, well," she said, laughing a little at their anxious expressions, "I suppose now that it's gone so far they'd better have it, but they'll have to stick to a few sensible rules with it."

Jill was ecstatic. Cars, West Point, clothes! It seemed as if life, after being rather grim and sterile for so long, had suddenly burst into lavish blossom.

In the upstairs hall the procession divided. Mrs. Dale went to lie down, and the girls and boys flocked into Jill's and Susan's room.

"Dad, come see our things!" urged Jill.

"Just a minute and I will. I want to talk to your mother first."

Ted dropped his load on the nearest bed, and the packages scattered wildly. Everybody talked at once.

"I got some things, too," said Ted, "but I had

them sent. Ordered some knickers—Scotch tweed—and bought some silk pajamas and a couple of sweaters at the London Shop"—Ted was something of a dandy—"and some good-looking wool golf stockings."

"You know I can hang this raincoat in the closet. It doesn't smell rubbery as the old one did," said Jill. She unpinned a tiny bunch of arbutus from the front of her frock—the arbutus that only a week ago had been too expensive. "I ought to put this in water. Go get me a vase, won't you, Randy, please? I'm too dead tired to move. There's some candy in that gray box."

"What'll I get? Stonehenge?"

Stonehenge was a neat little white china vase which bore those famous ruins faithfully depicted upon its round side.

"That'll do," said Jill. She cleared a space among the packages and dropped down. "Oh, me, I'm all in!"

"And get that magazine, too!" called Ted after Randy. "The one that has the advertisement of that house in it!"

Mr. Dale came to the door to say, "Quiet down, all of you. Mother wants to get a little rest before supper," and was lured in to look at the pretty things the girls had bought. Jill sat up, quite revived, to display her purchases.

"See, Dad, rose-quartz choker! Isn't it lovely? I never thought I'd get that unless I waited for years and had about a dozen birthday and Christmas presents combined! And look at that box there—green jersey dress with peasant embroidery. Isn't that swank?"

"I believe I won't take my dress out," said Sally, parting the folds of tissue paper for a glimpse of gleaming silky yellow. "I'd never be able to pack it up again so beautifully."

"Bev, take your grubby fingers off my new scarf, please!" implored Susan. "Dad, tell us more about the cars."

Randy returned with the vase and one of those large, heavy, slippery-paged magazines that are full of pictures of gardens and country houses and estates, of advertisements of cars and schools and puppy-dogs, and houses.

"Looks like a Giftie Shoppie!" he grinned, waving Stonehenge at the colorful array scattered over beds and bureaus and chairs. "Here's your beastly advertisement, Ted."

"Look." Ted spread the open magazine on Jill's lap and pointed to an impressive photograph of a modern Colonial house in gray stone with a wrought-iron lantern over the fan doorway, with a glass sun parlor at one end and at the other an arrangement of walls that concealed a kitchen garden and gradually

became a garage. There was a stretch of lawn and shrubbery that gave an air of spaciousness and dignity to the place. Ted read aloud while the girls hung over his shoulder and read to themselves:

FOR SALE: Fine choice property in this old prominent suburb. Colonial dignity best describes this charming residence of massive stone construction. First floor contains large living room, reception hall, library, music room, dining room, pantry, complete service department. Second floor 8 master bedrooms, 5 master bathrooms. Third floor adequate servants' quarters. 6-car garage with gardener's and chauffeur's quarters, formal flower and vegetable gardens, tennis court, tiled swimming-pool. 6 acres beautifully landscaped by Tillman and Sharp. Conv. to private schools, country-clubs, churches, stores. 23 minutes to City Hall. Offered for immediate sale.

"Doesn't that look familiar?" said Ted. "It's one of those new places in Chestnut Hill. How do you like it?"

"Ted Dale," demanded Sue, "you don't mean to—you don't mean that we could ever go live in a place like that, do you?"

"Why not? It would be a lot more convenient for all of us than this is. And while we're getting it we might as well get a place big enough for all of us to be comfortable."

Jill read the enticing advertisement once more and studied the picture. She tried to imagine the Dale family in that setting, and succeeded remarkably well. She saw light awnings, and the French windows

of the living room open on the terrace; she saw a scarlet car with a French horn on the side standing in the driveway; she saw herself and her family, beautifully dressed, mingling with elegant but slightly indefinite guests—all young—and drinking lemonade out of the vivid china lemonade set that she had once seen in a gift shop and coveted almost unbearably. Her whole conception of the scene bore a curious resemblance to a highly colored advertisement of ginger ale or porch chairs, but that point at the moment escaped Jill's notice.

"Oh, Dad, could we?" she said, almost afraid to hear the answer. It seemed a thing too glorious to happen.

"We'll see about it," said Mr. Dale. "If you girls have shown me all your gew-gaws, I'll go on downstairs."

Randy hung over the candy box and chose a chocolate-covered caramel before he delivered his final shot and stalked out: "You'll never get Mother into one of those fixed-up places in Chestnut Hill!"

"You mustn't go away from here, Jill!" said Sally, aghast at the mere mention of it.

Jill patted her arm absently. She felt dazed at the turn things had taken, the many avenues of beauty and luxury that seemed suddenly to open out before her. It would be glorious to live in a big new house and not to have to see anything shabby or ugly ever

again! But Jill had had too long a training in the taking of disappointments to allow herself to build up hopes that might prove false. She turned her mind resolutely to the joys that were near and sure.

"Sally, which of my new dresses would you take up to West Point to wear on Sunday morning?"

Ted gathered himself together and prepared to flee the "clothes session."

"Say any one of them, Sally," he advised tolerantly, "it doesn't matter which. She'll change her mind three times a day until she goes, anyhow. Just thought I'd show you this picture, Jill, and plant a seed in your young mind. It may not be the house for us, of course, but it looked mighty good to me."

He took himself off, leaving Jill and Sally and Sue to discuss clothes and West Point, while Beverley, unobserved, ate his way methodically through the candy box. After a while Randy called up the stairs that Lura wanted someone to set the table.

"Do you suppose we can ever find servants who'll be willing to work with Lura?" said Jill. "*Bev*, you little pig! You *will* be sick! Go wash the chocolate off your face, Bevvy. Goodness, I ought to have watched what he was doing!"

"There's some on your ear, too!" Susan called after him derisively. "Come on, let's go set the table."

They had reached the top of the stairs when Mrs. Dale called Jill.

"You go on," she said. "I'll be down in a minute."

She found her mother lying down on her bed, wearing the old negligé of a bright dark blue that made her eyes look like sapphires. Somehow the shabbiness of that old kimono tugged at Jill's heart; in all that long day in the shops, Mrs. Dale had bought nothing for herself.

"Jill, dear, tell Lura to cut the cake to-night instead of saving it for to-morrow."

The room was dim except for the light by the bed, and the rain lashed against the windows.

"I hope we have better weather than this two weeks from now!" said Mrs. Dale. "Did you have a good time buying as much as you wanted for the first time in your life?"

"Oh, heavenly!" said Jill. "I hope you aren't too dead tired. Do you want me to bring your supper up to you?"

"Goodness, no, thank you. I'll be right down."

Jill started to go, feeling that there was still something more her mother wanted to say to her. It came before she reached the door.

"Jill, you and Ted don't really want to leave the old house, do you?"

Jill fingered the door knob. "Well, if we could get a big new one, in a convenient place, yes. This house is so old and so shabby. Would you mind frightfully, Mother?"

"I hoped you wouldn't want to go. This house has so many possibilities, if you could only see them. It's always been my dream to have money enough to do the things to it that ought to be done! And besides, this is home!"

"Yes," said Jill, "I know."

"I shouldn't think you'd want to leave the house where you've all grown up," said Mrs. Dale, getting up and going over to her dressing table. "Why, you children don't remember any other house."

"Well, but," began Jill, and then she finished with a quotation from the *Rootabaga Stories*, "'It is too much to be too long anywhere!' But of course, if you don't want to go, Mother," she added with determined cheerfulness, "we'll down the idea and step on it."

Mrs. Dale, brushing her long dark hair, smiled at Jill in the mirror. "We'll think it over carefully," she said. "We want to do what will make all of us happiest, of course."

"Mother, you don't really care about this fortune, do you? Not wildly, as the rest of us do."

"Dear child, I care a great deal about the security that money brings, and I'm delighted to see you have pretty things and wider opportunities, but I don't want you to lose your heads! Hadn't you better go down to Sally now?"

Jill went slowly down the stairs. Her mother's

words had pricked the bubble of her elation. The more one had, the more one wanted! Already they had more than she would have believed possible a week ago, and already they were longing to exchange the old home for a big expensive new one. Life, Jill decided, sagging against the banister, even for the wealthy, was a sometimes uncomfortable alternation of joy and depression. And shopping on the grand scale made one just as tired as shopping for a hat to wear with both a green frock that had been cleaned and a blue one that had been dyed.

In the dining room Ted was being funny at the expense of the somewhat elderly collection of pictures that had gradually accumulated there.

"Shall we take the Blessed Damozel with us to the new house?" he said. "The answer is in the negative."

Jill joined them, casting a competent eye over the table that the four of them were supposedly engaged in setting.

"Nobody but me ever remembers salt and pepper!" she said plaintively.

The big, slippery-papered magazine sprawled open on the top of the sideboard. Jill, groping underneath in the cupboard for the salt cellars, lost herself in that alluring advertisement. Master's bedrooms, living room, tennis court, swimming pool. . . . "offered for immediate sale. . . ."

CHAPTER VIII

WEST POINT

"WELL, according to the papers," said Jill, summing up the information gleaned from the four dailies spread out on the table before her, "to-morrow will be fair and rainy and cloudy and warmer and colder! I suppose it's too much to ask for sunshine. If it just doesn't rain I'll be satisfied!"

As she spoke a gust of wind howled around the corner of the house and lashed the rain against the windows. Pieces of wet soot rustled down the chimney.

"It's perfect-ly aw-ful weather," said Sue dolefully from the sofa.

Jill selected the newspaper that had prophesied rain and crumpled it up to start a fire with. "That's all you deserve," she muttered. She felt, with the same logic that blames the postman for not bringing a desired letter, that if the editor had been a little more amiable or a little more efficient, the weather report could have been so much more satisfactory.

She went to the window and drew the curtains aside. The night outdoors, acting like mercury on the

glass, made the pane a mirror which showed her herself, the gold hair curling against her neck, the pretty mouth drooping a little, and the big eyes dark in the shadows. Over her shoulder she saw the living room with the darting flames in the fireplace and the members of the family, each absorbed in a book, grouped around the lamp on the center table.

Mr. Dale looked up from the *Automobile Blue Book*. "We'll go to-morrow, Jill, rain or shine," he said consolingly.

"So many things have been invented," sighed Jill, "I don't see why some bright spirit can't think up a way to control the weather."

Randy spoke up. He was studying physics in school and was delighted at any time to explain the theory of radio or the wherefore of specific density. "It could be done," he declared from the platform of his learning. "You could have an instrument that would send out electric waves to counteract any storm that was on the way."

Ted and Susan threw their books aside. The Dales were always ready to stop whatever they were doing and enter with zest upon some impossible argument.

"But how," demanded Susan, "are you going to regulate the weather to suit everybody?"

"You'd get politics all mixed up in it," said Ted, the man of the world. "You'd have to have a Department and a Cabinet Member. The farm bloc would

want rain for crops, and all the amusement park interests would be lobbying for hot sunshine by the ton. It would get into party platforms and everything—'For next President elect Jimmie Jones the Sunshine Man!' Nice mess it would be."

"Oh, there's only one sensible way to manage it," said Jill. "Have it rain every night from twelve to six and be sunny every day. You'd make that a law at the very beginning and after that nobody would bother about it!"

"Fat chance nobody would bother, if you made it a law!" put in Randy. "Just make it a law that there are to be no rainy days and everybody would want one. You'd get," he chuckled, "bootleg rain at a high price!"

"Oh, I'd have one rainy day every month or so, and give everybody a holiday to enjoy it—to stay home and eat apples and fudge and read in front of the fire. Anyhow," finished Jill, "I'd arrange it somehow so that when deserving damsels wanted to go to West Point they'd get decent weather for it!"

It was Friday night, and the next day the Dales and Sally were starting early for West Point. That is, five of the Dales were going. Ted was staying home for a dinner party which Dabney was to give, and Beverley was being bribed with a scarlet fire engine to be a good boy and stay with Sally's mother. Randy and Susan, though too young for the dance, were

going for the long motor ride and to see the Military Academy. To the Dales it seemed, without the eldest and the youngest of the tribe, a much curtailed affair, but to some outsiders it was a rather ludicrously large family gathering.

"Nobody but you," said a school friend, whose relatives were numerous and uncongenial, "would ever think of starting out for a dance with the whole family in tow!"

To which Jill had replied absently, "I wish Ted were going."

The 'phone rang with its shrill, insistent chitter, and Ted said, "You go, Jill. It's probably Sally—she hasn't called you up for at least fifteen minutes!"

"Jill," Sally's voice came triumphantly over the wire, "I just called up the weather bureau, and they say it's going to be *fair* to-morrow!"

And fair it was, sparklingly, radiantly fair, with an impossibly blue sky, with every wee green leaf and tight red bud newly washed, with daffodils bumping their trumpets together in the light breeze and dandelions like bright buttons in the green on the lawn, with the shadows sharp and light and delicate, and everywhere the fresh, ecstatic smell of spring.

"'The world-wide air was azure!'" quoted Jill happily. "'And all the brooks ran gold.'"

The new blue sedan, washed and shiny from the silver figure on its radiator cap to the black cover on

its huge spare tire, stopped before Sally Scott's door.

Sally came running out, her suitcase bumping against her legs as she came.

"Oh, Jill," she cried, "you look glorious! That coat is divine!"

The coat was new, of a lovely green, with a fur collar that rose fluffily to meet the soft green felt hat crushed down over Jill's wavy gold hair. Between collar and hat Jill's flushed cheeks showed, and her big gray-green eyes, starry with happy excitement.

"Oh, you do, too, Sally!" she said breathlessly. "You look simply stunning!"

Sally's rig, tan and brown with a touch of orange to set off her brown hair and warm skin, ingeniously contrived to look new and fresh, though separate items in it could be recognized as of last year's vintage.

"Yes, you're a pair of lovely young things," said Mr. Dale, "and you're very becoming to each other, but please get out from under foot while I fix this baggage."

Everybody wanted to help. Result: confusion.

"Here," said Ted, who was superintending the departure, "let's have some system. Get in, Sally—on the back seat. Make Randy ride on the side seat. Come along, Jill. You look like a grasshopper—hop in."

The suitcases—Jill's was new, with tortoise-shell

fittings—were strapped on the back, and the cover trimly fastened down. Mrs. Scott, white-haired and sweet, stood on the steps and waved. Beverley opened his mouth to howl and was diverted by Ted, who deftly wedged a large lollypop into the howl at the right instant. Randy made unsuccessful jokes. Jill and Sally and Susan on the back seat gripped each other's hands speechlessly. Mrs. Dale looked distressed over leaving her baby behind. Mr. Dale pressed his foot gently on the accelerator.

The trip to West Point had begun!

"I just adore," said Susan, "to settle back and know I'm going to ride and ride and ride, and end up somewhere different from where I began!"

"This car is so comfortable!" murmured Sally.

"Capting, Capting," Mr. Dale started the familiar chant with which they began all their motor trips, "how many miles to Bosting?"

"Eleving!" chorused the rest of the Dales.

"Eleving? Heaving! I thought it was only seving!"

They were still in the home country. It was reminiscent of winter, brown and fallow, with the promise of spring in the air and in the meadows: a light patch of green here, a veil of pale green in the willows over a creek high from the spring rains, pinkish buds in the distant woods, a flock of bluebirds, bright as spring itself, scattering over a brown field. Whitewashed fences sailed by, and huge Pennsylvania barns with

their squat white pillars, hints of houses behind trees. It was pretty country, fresh and sweet and open.

After a while they crossed the river into New Jersey and sped along the perfect roads between broad level fields. Ploughed ground was darkly, richly brown, or red, or pinkish gray. There were towns, settled and civilized, where great houses were protected from the road by expanses of lawn and tall wrought-iron fences, there were towns where odd little boxes of houses sat up high off the ground as if they had no connection with it and were surprised at finding themselves where they were.

The travelers had lunch early at an old inn, and when they went on again they found hills, and distant views, and curving roads through woodland. Everyone sat up straighter, and began to feel again the excitement that had been lulled by the miles upon miles of steady, smooth speed.

At the gate of West Point a guard stopped them, learned that they were bound for the hotel, and gave them a pass. They went on slowly up a winding road, and exclaimed with joy over each new bit of evidence of the military.

"Look, children, those are the houses where the officers live!" said Mrs. Dale, who used to go to West Point to dances when she was a little older than Jill.

"There's the Hudson!" cried Randy.

It was far below them, blue and shining, winding among the sheer violet hills that rose straight out of its waters.

"I hear music!" cried Susan.

"The band! The band!" shrieked Jill and Sally, clutching each other.

The blare of a trumpet, the martial rattle and roll of a drum, the whole gay lift of tune sent shivers to Jill's finger tips.

"Oh, Dad, hurry!" she begged.

Another turn brought them to the top of the hill. Parade was on! Before them spread out the green plain of the parade ground, where cadets, lines and ranks of gray-uniformed men, wheeled and marched. The sun shone on their brass buttons, on their white cross-belts, on the insignia on their hats. Beyond them were the massed buildings, gray and military, of the barracks; below, and to one side, the gleaming river; up above, on a hill, the gray chapel, triumphant and beautiful, rose into the air.

Jill felt the tears in her eyes, and tilted her chin high to keep it steady. The beauty of it hurt. The flag swept by, brilliant and brave, then the band and the marching men, row after row, crisp, impersonal, seemingly endless.

Mr. Dale had stopped the car, and they had all slipped out, and were standing, oblivious to the other

spectators around them, behind one of the little iron benches that bordered the parade ground.

The music died away. The last squads grew small across the plain. Jill felt her father squeeze her arm understandingly.

"I recognized Billy in every other cadet that went by!" said Sally. "Didn't they all look exactly alike?"

"Bill said to meet him at the gilt statue!" said Randy. "Where under the sun do you suppose is the gilt statue?"

The crowd of people was drifting toward the barracks, where the cadets, having discarded their crossbelts and guns, were swarming out. The Dales found the gilt statue without any trouble, and beside it, trying to look in every direction at once, were Billy Wyeth and another cadet.

"Billy!"

"Jill!"

They all piled out of the car once more.

"This is great!" said Billy, shaking hands with them all and beaming cordially on them, but looking most at Jill. "Oh!" He remembered his roommate, who was to take care of Sally. "This is Mr. Walker."

There were introductions all round; then the car, with Mr. and Mrs. Dale, Randy and Susan, faded tactfully out of the picture, and the two girls with their cadets were left on the edge of the parade ground.

"Trophy Point?" said Mr. Walker, and he and Sally started off.

Billy crooked his arm, and Jill, seeing from the example of the couples all around her that it was the thing to do, slipped her hand through it.

"Well," said Billy.

"Well," echoed Jill.

It had been more than three months since she had seen Billy, and then she had been in her own familiar background. Jill felt suddenly shy. She looked up at Billy, so very tall and handsome and stiff beside her, with the sun gleaming on his brass buttons, on the sharp-shooter medal on his chest, and the gold chevrons on his sleeve. But his eyes, as he turned to meet her look, were as brown and friendly as ever.

"Billy," she confessed, "you look so splendid I'm almost afraid of you!"

"You! Jill, you look like a million dollars!"

"I am a million dollars!" answered Jill, laughing. "You heard about our fortune? Imagine it, *us!* You remember last Christmas how we put the mending of the cellar door into the Christmas tree, and the cellar door stayed broken? Oh, what's that?"

They were halted by a slow procession passing along the road that they were going to cross.

"Military funeral!" said Sally, turning back.

"Some cavalry officer on his last ride," said Billy thoughtfully.

Ahead were khaki figures on dark horses, silent and slow; behind them came the casket, draped in the bright red, white, and blue of the flag; and then the riderless horse, blanketed and hooded in black, with his master's boots pointed backward hanging from the empty saddle, was led slowly along. A little group of carriages followed.

The four young things waited until the cortège slowly disappeared around the curve of the road that led to the cemetery, before, a little subdued, they turned toward Trophy Point. The contrasts of West Point! The grim below the beautiful. It hinted, ever so distantly, of the purpose for which these light-hearted, erect boys were gathered at the stirring old military academy. Jill, brought up in a Quaker school, would have preferred West Point to be a thrilling spectacle, untouched by the shadow of anything so ugly and bitter as war.

Among the cannons on Trophy Point they caught up again with Sally and Mr. Walker. Walker, J. P., they called him, Billy said, to distinguish him from Walker, P. H. Jill studied him whenever he was not looking her way. He was not tall, like Billy, but he was very erect; he had light curly hair, the bluest of eyes, and an extraordinarily wide mouth that disclosed shining teeth when he smiled, as he often did, most engagingly. He and Sally were chatting together as if they had known each other a long time.

"Well, where to?" said J. P. "Baseball practice—there is no game—or sightseeing, or Flirtation Walk?"

"I guess Jill would like to see some of the buildings and things, wouldn't you, Jill?" said Billy.

"What do you want to see?" demanded J. P.

"Everything!" said Jill.

"I might have known it," groaned J. P. "I took my three maiden aunts all over the post last Saturday, and my four grandmothers the week before! I recite the history of things in my sleep! Let's go!"

In spite of J. P.'s groans they saw everything, and had a hilariously good time doing it. The riding hall, the library, the mess hall, the "area" where unfortunate cadets (called "area-birds") were working off demerits by walking back and forth, back and forth, monotonously all afternoon, the board where the daily grades were posted (Jill saw Billy's 3.0 in mathematics and was not particularly impressed until J. P. explained that it was the highest mark, equal to 100), the "boodler's" (where the cadets came to get cigarettes and kodak films and pies), the commandant's quarters (viewed respectfully from the outside). They glanced at the baseball practice that was going on, they passed Cullum Hall ("You'll see that to-night," said Billy), and stopped once or twice to look up at the height where the chapel ("You'll see that to-morrow") seemed to grow out of the hillside. And everywhere they went they found

other cadets and girls—gray coats and rows of buttons, little bright hats and swinging skirts, laughter and deep voices.

Inevitably they drifted to Flirtation Walk, and there, for the walk was winding and narrow, and two are happier than four, they separated. Jill, who had pictured the famous walk a sort of esplanade, was surprised to find it just a path through the woods along the bank of the river. Here and there, jutting out into the water, would be a long finger of rock with a much absorbed couple perched thereon, or through the trees a vista would open up showing the curve of the river with a boat or two on it and the reflection of the high banks rippling on the blue surface of the water. It was quiet and peaceful and friendly. Jill's momentary feeling of shyness had vanished, and she and Billy talked away as they would have talked on the bank of the swimming hole at home.

"What do you think of J. P.?" said Billy. "Let's sit down here a bit."

They clambered down to sit upon a gray rock in the sunshine.

"Oh, I like him," answered Jill warmly.

"He's a splendid chap. He and Sally ought to get along well together. He's probably telling her all his troubles now." Billy laughed. "He's in a fine pickle. He writes to six femmes—girls—but Dorothy is his

queen. Well, he made out a list of his girls in order as they rank with him, with Dorothy first, and he was going to send it to her, but he happened to be writing to a girl named Birdie the same day and he got the letters mixed! Well, Birdie stood sixth, and when she got that list, she was mad as a wet hen and wrote back crossing him out of her life forever!"

They spoke of Ted, and of Billy's work, his place on the class team, his difficulty with mechanical drawing. They spoke, too, of the fortune and the Dales' plans.

"We're going to move, you know," said Jill. "It's all decided, Billy, we've got the *most* heavenly house in Chestnut Hill. Just as soon as the settlement is made and all that red tape gone through, we're going to put a firm of decorators in there to furnish it up for us in double-quick time."

"Then by the time I get home for furlough," said Billy, "you'll be all moved and out of the old house on the Pike?"

"Yes. Doesn't it seem funny?"

"It won't seem the same place at all with you gone. What's to be done with the old house? Sold?"

"We're going to rent it furnished if we can. But, Billy, Chestnut Hill isn't so far away, really. You must come over lots. We'll have tennis courts and a swimming pool, and we can have heaps of fun with them."

"Umhmm," assented Billy. "Great. How does your mother like it?"

"Well, she wasn't crazy about it at all at first, but all of a sudden she said she was willing if we wanted it. It really will be better for her in the long run. It's so much nearer the city and more convenient. And, oh, Billy, when you've struggled for years with shabby old things that are about to fall to pieces like the One-Hoss Shay, it's such a joy to have all new things around you! Is it time to go?"

Billy gave her his strong warm hands and pulled her up. The sun was slanting through the trees in a late-afternoon sort of way, and the breath of the river was growing chilly.

"Of course you know, Jill," said Billy, as they walked slowly along the path, "I'm ever so glad you've got all this money—but in a way I'm sort of sorry, too."

"Why?" said Jill, puzzled and a little indignant.

"Well, it's hard to explain. But things were so homey and nice around your old place, and now it will all be changed."

"No, it won't, Billy," protested Jill earnestly. "Not really. I'll promise you this, anyhow—we'll never change to our old friends."

"All right," said Billy soberly.

He left her on the front steps of the hotel. It was the same hotel where her mother had stayed when

she, as a girl, came to West Point to dances, and her mother before her; built about 1840, it had still an old-time atmosphere that was very charming. Jill, not seeing any of her family on the high piazza, went into the office to find out the number of her room. While she waited for the clerk to answer her question, she watched with interest a girl who was arranging about her room. Probably she, too, was going to the dance to-night. She was very pretty, and seemed so assured, so poised. Jill felt suddenly young and inexperienced. If she could only have become twenty in that moment—twenty and sure of herself—she would gladly have sacrificed the four intervening years!

She found that she and Sally and Sue had been assigned to the same room, a room on the fifth floor under the cupola, a room equipped with five cots, one chair, one bureau, a looking glass with a wavy streak down the center, and just now overflowing with suitcases and hat boxes. Susan was there to help the older girls make themselves beautiful.

"I wish you were going, too, Sue," said Jill.

Her frock, which her mother had had pressed for her while she was out, lay on the bed. She reached over and touched it gently.

"Randy and I are going down to the ferry and ride back and forth across the river," said Susan cheerfully. "I love ferries. They bobble so, and they smell

so oystery. Come here, Sally, and I'll fasten that for you."

Chattering volubly, Sally backed up to her. "Isn't J. P. nice? Aren't you scared stiff about the dance? I am, though of course I'm piping it tremendously—piping is Kaydet for looking forward to. Do you know what an L. P. is? J. P. wouldn't tell me exactly, but it means the kind of girl you don't want to drag. Wouldn't it be awful if I turned out to be an L. P.? But I don't see how anybody could in this dress. You certainly were darling to give it to me."

"You?" said Jill warmly. "You couldn't be an L. P. if you tried."

In the soft yellow frock Sally looked her vivid best; it suited exactly her shining sleek dark hair, her olive skin, her bright cheeks and brown eyes.

Jill took her turn at the mirror. By tipping the glass back she could see her head; then she could tip it forward and see her feet; piecemeal she got the general effect, and liked it. The rose-pink taffeta dress with the cream lace bertha, the tight bodice and full long skirt, made her look more dazzlingly fair than ever. Her wavy gold hair was pinned up; she wore her new rose-quartz beads around her throat.

Mrs. Dale, in a king's blue velvet that almost matched her eyes, came in to help with the final touches.

"How sweet you both look!" she exclaimed. "Jill,

is your hair perfectly firm? Sukey dear, I wish you were going, too, but never mind, there will be other fun for you. Dad wants us all to come down to dinner now."

They walked to Cullum Hall through the starry spring evening, Jill's hand on Billy's stiff, woollen gray arm. Other couples passed them; a girl laughed; a cadet hailed Billy; a dance card, dangling by its cord from a brass button on the chest of a yearling, gleamed under a light; Cullum Hall loomed up massive and white in the darkness.

Sally was ahead of her in the dressing room, dropping her old serge cape on top of a splendid blue brocade one evidently without a thought for its shabbiness. Jill slipped out of her own black velvet wrap, whirled around before the glass, gave a dab at her hair, seized Sally's hand, and fled with her to meet Billy and J. P., who stood at the foot of the stairs buttoning their white cotton gloves. Mr. and Mrs. Dale followed them, and they all went upstairs to the receiving line together.

It passed quickly, that glorious, glorious dance. Jill loved it all—the long ballroom, with its flags and white marble, its air of romance, the gray and gold uniforms, the music of the cadet orchestra, the stunning hop manager with his red silk sash, the balcony overlooking the river where they walked between dances. She was there with Billy when the glittering

night boat went up the Hudson under the black hills and turned its searchlight full on the balcony.

Billy had managed to put nice men and good dancers on her card. And then, having put them there, he seemed set on a campaign to outwit them and cheat them out of their dances.

"This one is with Mr. Thompson," he would say, putting his white-gloved thumb upon a name on her hop card. "Well, we won't find him."

Whereupon they would start to dance, but in a moment a hand would come down on Billy's shoulder and a voice would say:

"My hop, I think."

"Couldn't find you," Billy would reply shamelessly, and would introduce the newcomer. "Miss Dale, Mr. Thompson."

Mr. Thompson would then introduce his "femme." "Miss Jones, Miss Dale. Miss Jones, Mr. Wyeth."

It was all very formal, but by the end of the first encore, Mr. Thompson would be calling her Jill and telling her she was a good little dancer. All of the cadets, Jill found, were adepts at pretty speeches, from the tall Texan named Roddy who danced like a whirlwind and who exclaimed out of a clear sky, "Jove, but you're pretty!" to a serious-minded youth with sergeant's chevrons who paid her the unintelligible compliment that "Wyeth was dragging keen." The stags were massed in the middle of the floor,

and on the dances where it was permitted, first one, then another, would spot a girl he wanted to dance with, would stiffen his shoulders, tighten his gloves, and rush out among the revolving couples to "cut in." Jill had her full share—and more—of "cut-in's."

Now and then she stopped to speak to her father and mother, who sat along the wall with the other chaperons. Mr. Dale went back to the hotel at ten to see if Susan and Randy were all right, and reported that they had spent a dollar riding back and forth on the ferry and seemed to be in a very cheerful frame of mind. She saw Sally often, on the balcony, downstairs where the punch was served, or in the crowded doorway. They exchanged dances several times, and Jill found J. P. amusing and likable.

It seemed so short a time before the orchestra was playing "Army Blue," the slow, sad waltz that made Jill's eyes grow moist. There was no sound but the subdued swing of the music, the undertone of sliding feet, and Billy singing softly in her ear:

> "We've not much longer here to stay,
> For in a month or two
> We'll bid farewell to cadet gray
> And don the Army blue."

"Oh, Billy," Jill whispered, "I don't want the hop to be over!"

The moon was up when they came out of Cullum

Hall to walk back to the hotel. It flooded the plain with silver light.

According to rules, Billy could put one foot on the hotel steps when he said good-night.

"You were the prettiest girl there, Jill," he told her, "and the best dancer, and I was proud and happy to have you there with me!"

"It was heavenly, Billy," said Jill softly. The other couples around them had melted away, the girls had gone indoors, and the boys started for the barracks. "Billy, you'll be late!" urged Jill.

He gripped her hands, and then started off at the stiff cadet trot. Jill leaned against the pillar and watched him jogging across the moonlit parade ground until he disappeared among the shadows.

Her father was waiting in the hall to see that she got in all right.

"Good time, old girl?" he said.

"Perfect. Oh, me, I've 'most danced my feet off! Oh, Dad, it was glorious!"

CHAPTER IX

AFTERMATH

IT WAS Thursday morning. The Friends' School was getting ready for Meeting. The big square building was filled with an orderly confusion: the inevitable subdued chatter as the lines formed—lines under the big clock, lines under the oil painting of Independence Hall, lines at the doors of classrooms—a few last-minute girls struggling up the stairs from the cloakroom in the basement, a few last-minute boys panting through the side door from the gymnasium, teachers, hatted and gloved, taking their stations. The word was given and a line of girls started out the front door, a line of the younger boys out the back. Jill slipped into her place beside Sally just in time. In a moment they were walking sedately across the big school yard under the huge old walnut trees, and mounting the steps to the Meeting-house porch. Here they stepped softly on the dim red tiles, feeling already the hush and peace of the place.

The room where Meeting was held was a wide and simple one, softly bright, with nothing to distract the eye or the mind from meditation. There was no

attempt at decoration, nothing to look at but the cream-colored walls, the rows of gray benches, the tall windows with their green Venetian blinds. The school filed quietly in and took their accustomed places, the girls, according to the Quaker tradition, on one side of the center aisle, and the boys on the other. In front, facing the room, sat the "elders of the Meeting" upon their raised benches. One or two among the women wore still the old-time "plain dress" of the Friends, and looked quaint and pretty in their gray gowns and small black bonnets.

Jill settled down on her bench, registering gratitude that it happened to be one of the cushioned ones, and smiled faintly at Randy across the aisle. He was lucky enough to have one of the end seats, which gave him a support for his elbow. He rested his flaming head upon his hand, with the fingers cupped over his eyes, and he looked like one who is sunk in the profoundest of thoughts. Actually, as Jill knew, he would soon be enjoying a pleasant nap.

For a moment or two there was a little restless air of expectation which lasted until all the school children were seated and the two or three tardy Friends—a young woman with a shopping bag, a dignified white-haired old gentleman—had taken their places, and then, like a calm wave, the silence and peace slipped in.

Jill loved this quiet hour that made a breathing

space once in the hustle and clatter of every school week. To-day it seemed especially friendly. She was depressed and out of sorts, and tired. Tired with an aching fatigue that got into her very bones, and made her feet and hands too heavy and her neck stiff, her throat dry and sore. West Point, as she looked back across five days upon it, seemed to her a radiant experience which had been hers in some previous existence and which had no connection at all with this present life of grayness. Ever since Monday morning, when she had arrived at school late and heavy-eyed, suffering from that gone feeling which one has when elation has suddenly departed, leaving one's heart rather stretched and empty, and had tried to bluff her five totally unprepared lessons and failed miserably, she had been trying to catch up with herself. She came back to afternoon study hall to correct her badly done work and spent most of her time drawing barracks and cannon upon her blotter. In class she fixed her eyes upon her teachers with a rapt attention and was startled to find, when called on to recite, that she had not the slightest idea of what was being talked about. She made absurd mistakes in her geometry "originals," and could not see them even when they were pointed out to her.

"I should think the teachers would loathe me," she told herself honestly.

It was strange that she should be so weary and

dispirited. She had left West Point in a very uplifted frame of mind, eager to express in her life of everyday those ideals which she conceived West Point as standing for, eager to become everything that Billy thought her. Her watchword she had taken from chapel on Sunday morning.

She would never forget that chapel service, she thought. The guests had stood on the stone porch, high above the parade ground and the gray barracks, and had watched the ranks of cadets come marching up the hill. They started on the road down below, tiny toy soldiers, with the sunshine glittering on their brass buttons, and they grew into something more like giants as they swept up the stone steps to the sound of their own steady tramp and the clipped commands of the cadet officers and, breaking ranks at the door, surged into the chapel itself. When they were all seated, the visitors who had gathered on the porch were allowed to go in, and places were found for them by the cadet ushers. Billy, near the back, was watching for Jill, and he signaled to her to come and sit beside him. She slipped in between him and a big football player with whom she had danced the night before, and felt very much pleased with herself for sitting proudly among the cadets instead of being tucked away in corners with the rest of the visitors.

The next moment, however, the choir marched in, a hundred and thirty-seven men, singing "O Mother

Dear, Jerusalem" (which Jill had always privately considered a rather wishy-washy hymn) so that it sounded like a great shout of triumph, and Jill forgot herself.

Sitting here in the old Meeting-house, Jill shut her eyes, shut out the cream-colored walls, the benches, the rows of familiar heads, and saw instead that gray chapel, with the sunlight blazing in the rich reds and greens and royal blues of its glorious stained-glass window, with the silk battle flags hanging motionless from the pillars, with the lines of erect, gray-coated men joining with one deep voice in the words of the simple and sincere service. Fragments of the cadet prayer came back to her:

> Make us to choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong and never to be content with the half truth when the whole can be won. . . . Endow us with a courage that is born of loyalty to all that is noble and worthy. . . . Kindle our hearts in fellowship with those of a cheerful countenance and soften our hearts with sympathy for those who suffer and sorrow. . . .

At the last the choir had sung "The Corps," that ringing, stirring hymn whose mere memory sent a shiver down Jill's spine. The final lines came out like a trumpet—

> "Or living or dying to honor
> The Corps and the Corps and the Corps!"

No wonder that Jill came away stirred, resolved to keep everything that was petty or ugly out of her life.

"Strong and beautiful and brave," she said to Billy after Sunday dinner when they went down to Flirtation Walk for the last few minutes, "—that's what America *ought* to be. You see it in flashes every once in a while like in chapel this morning."

She had been home four days now, and she had not yet had strength enough to unpack her pretty suitcase. If Susan had not taken out her pink dance frock and hung it away for her it would still have been reposing between a pair of silver slippers and a pamphlet with views of West Point, growing every minute more creased. Her throat hurt when she swallowed; she was too tired to do her lessons, too tired to put her clothes away when she was through wearing them, too tired even to pull up her stockings.

At the back of the Meeting-house a Friend rose and spoke from the verse, "Be not weary in well-doing."

At eleven the elders—how could they know what time it was without looking at their watches?—shook hands, and Meeting was over. The school filed out decorously and broke ranks with a whoop as soon as they reached the yard.

"Jill, is thee feeling perfectly well?" One of the teachers overtook Jill's slow progress.

"I'm all right, I guess, Teacher Rachel," replied Jill. "I've got a sort of sore throat."

"Well, thee doesn't look well. I think thee'd better go home. Is there someone thee can telephone to come get thee?"

The idea of leaving school before the last bell had rung at one-thirty had never entered Jill's head. Once suggested, however, it seemed remarkably sensible. 'Enry could come for her. 'Enry was the new chauffeur, an Englishman who seemed, according to his own accounts, never to have worked for anything less exalted than a duke. The young Dales received him with a joviality that was at times bewildering to him.

"If you've never driven anything smaller than a Rolls-Royce, 'Enry," Randy cautioned him, "why, you'd better look out with this little sedan. You might mislay it in traffic."

"All these belted earls, practically in the family," said Ted, "ought to shed a lot of luster on our social position."

'Enry said nothing and never looked amused.

The office where the telephone stood was full of boys and girls, buying lunch checks, asking about book supplies, telephoning home about plans for the afternoon. Jill waited, leaning against the windowsill and burying her nose in a pot of white hyacinths.

"Jill," Susan was beside her, "somebody said you weren't feeling well. What's the matter? Want me to telephone for you?"

Sally flew in. "Jill, I've been looking for you everywhere! What's the matter? You look as if you felt rotten! Want a glass of water or anything?"

By the time that 'Enry arrived, Jill was convinced by her sympathizing friends that she was ill indeed. She leaned back against the comfortable blue upholstery of the sedan and felt her throat solicitously. There was, there *was* a swelling under her ear. Mastoiditis?

"I think you just have a cold all through you," said her mother, looking keenly at her, "and swollen glands. You'd better go right to bed, and if you're not better to-morrow, I'll send for the doctor."

So Jill went to bed, with a hot-water bottle at her feet and with her throat covered with a greasy ointment that burned fierily, and swathed in soft flannel. On the table beside her was a vase of daffodils from the garden, a pitcher of water and a glass, and a bottle of rhinitis tablets.

"Now try to get some sleep," said her mother, and left her.

Being an invalid, she had chicken broth and ice cream for supper. Her father came in afterward to put his big cool hand on her forehead and ask what she meant by playing this kind of trick on them; Ted read

to her from a detective story in which he was much interested; Randy refilled her hot-water bottle; Susan, in order that she might rest entirely undisturbed, collected her belongings and went to sleep on the cot in Beverley's room. Mrs. Dale, the very last thing, came in with a glass of cold water. She adjusted the windows and straightened up the bed, and then sat down on the edge of it.

"You don't look well, chickabiddy," she said, taking Jill's hot hand in her cool ones. "I wish I'd sent for the doctor. But it seemed like an ordinary cold—and you *were* sitting on the damp grass yesterday afternoon. I think you have a little fever. How do you feel now?"

"I'm all right," said Jill. But her head felt heavy, and she wasn't sure whether it was her ears or her throat that ached. "No, don't kiss me," she warned. "You might catch my cold."

"I'll leave my door open, and if you want anything, call me. I do hope you'll feel better in the morning, darling."

It was nearly morning when Jill woke up. The night light in the hall shone dimly on the matting; beyond the square black holes that were the open windows the wind stirred and a screech owl shrieked. Jill felt roasted in the bedclothes that had wound themselves tightly around her. The bottom sheet was wrinkled and full of crumbs from the crackers that

she had had for supper. Her throat was dry and sore. She reached for the glass of water, and when she opened her mouth to take a drink she felt a pain as sharp as a knife in her jaw.

"Oh," she whispered, very much surprised.

A shadow fell across the matting, and her mother in wrapper and slippers tiptoed in. "Feeling badly, Jill?"

"Rotten. Turn on the light a sec, Mother, please. I want to get these crumbs out."

The sudden light made her screw up her eyes. When she grew used to the glare she saw herself reflected in the looking glass across the room, sitting up in the tumbled bed, her yellow hair wildly tousled, her eyes bright, her cheeks—her cheeks——

"Mother!" she gasped, as her hand flew up to her neck, "I've got the mumps! Look at me!"

CHAPTER X

MOVING

THE doctor laughed when he looked at Jill next morning. She gamely tried to smile back, but the smile lost itself among the ample folds of her swollen face.

"Well, it's not much trouble to diagnose *your* complaint!" he said, with what Jill regarded as unwarranted cheerfulness. "How wide can you open your mouth?" Jill opened it painfully, perhaps an inch, and closed it again on the thermometer which he poked in. Then, having silenced her, he began after the manner of doctors to ask questions.

"When did you begin to feel sick?"

"Yup wup!" replied Jill through set teeth, while the thermometer, dislodged, bumped gently against her nose.

Nodding as if he understood perfectly, he reached for her wrist and put his fingers on her pulse. Jill waited.

"Too bad you didn't get them two years ago when all the rest of the family did," he said finally, drawing

the thermometer out of her mouth. "How did you happen to escape, anyhow?"

"I stayed at Sally's."

"That's true. I'd forgotten. Well, you've got them now. No sourballs or lemonade!"

Jill groaned to show the anguish with which the mere mention of those delicacies filled her. The doctor gathered up his things. "You'll be pretty miserable for a few days. Let me know if you don't sleep. Better keep your head tied up!" With another jovial laugh he departed.

Jill felt better in spite of herself. When Randy, Ted, and Susan, assured by the doctor that they were not likely to take the disease again, came trooping in, she was glad to see them.

For a long moment they looked at her with amusement struggling in their eyes and their lips tightly compressed, before, Randy first and sympathetic Sue, last, they broke down and burst into gales of laughter. Jill, raising herself on her elbow, gazed at them silently and a little pathetically.

Susan was the first to recover herself. "I think it's mean to laugh so," she said indignantly. "It isn't funny at all, really."

"It isn't unbecoming to you," said Ted with a tremendous effort toward gravity. "It changes your type, that's all—makes you a stylish stout!"

Randy uttered the high cackle that contrasted so

oddly with his deep bass voice. "I'll tell you what's so funny about it," he said, "you've got on such a dressy kimono with all the pink frills, and then your face rises out of it all round and balloonish and solemn——"

Jill felt suddenly like throwing something at her dear brothers. Here she was, sick and miserable and hideous, and the only thing they could do for her was to come and jeer! A blue quilted satin bedroom slipper being nearest at hand, she threw that. Randy, looking rather ashamed of himself, reached out and caught it just in time to save it from flying out of the window.

"If you boys can't be nice," sputtered Susan, "you'd better get out. Never you mind, Jill. You ought to have seen Randy when he had the mumps. He looked like the fat lady at the circus."

The boys calmed down, apologized abjectly, and bent their efforts toward proving how charmingly attentive they could be. Ted brought a large silk handkerchief which he tied gently around her mumps, finishing it at the top with a rakish knot like two particularly alert rabbit's ears. "Entirely," he pointed out, "according to the best mumpish tradition." Randy offered to bring her anything to eat, from peanut brittle to junket, offered to read to her anything from *Science and Invention* to *Elsie Dinsmore*. Both boys were still being industriously sympathetic and kind when their mother came to shoo them away, saying that Jill should sleep.

What irked Jill as the days went on was not so much the pain and discomfort of the mumps as the realization that she was missing all those things which she considered most interesting. The house in Chestnut Hill was bought and the last papers signed. A firm of decorators was interviewed and told to go ahead. A Scotch gardener was engaged, and for several days all the Dales made lists of flowers and shrubs which McTavish censored.

("Of course," said Mrs. Dale apologetically when one of her most cherished ideas was ruled out as imprrractical by the autocratic McTavish, "I realize that Scotch gardeners are the best gardeners in the world, but——"

"Aye," interrupted McTavish, "and it's no every Scotch garrrdener that's like *me !*")

The work of furnishing and decorating the house went forward swiftly. There were endless conferences, and constantly questions came up to be decided. Sue made a flying trip to town one afternoon to pass judgment on the furniture for her room, and came home to babble joyfully about the pretty painted things of soft dull green stenciled with prim flowers in apricot and pale lemon color. Ted wanted an old chest in his room, and one of the decorator's men went up into the Pennsylvania Dutch region to find exactly the right one. Jill, consulted as to her tastes, stipulated for a mahogany four-poster bed, a fitted desk, and

flame-colored silk curtains, but was willing to leave the details to the experts.

Every afternoon found the Dales assembling at the new house, which bore, carved upon its stone gateposts, the name Graylock. Mrs. Dale, with Beverley and Susan and sometimes Randy, drove over in the coupé; Ted, usually accompanied by Twig or Dabney or both, arrived in the scarlet touring car which had been baptized by Twig the Red Imp. 'Enry took Mr. Dale there in the sedan on the way home from the office. Just in time for supper the processions would come rolling home, the Red Imp in the lead. Jill would hear the musical toot of its horn, and would know that it was skidding on two wheels into the sharp turn of the driveway. Presently all the family would come trooping up to her room to report the day's progress.

First of all they would inquire solicitously about her health, and then they would bestow upon her the day's offering, one day a book, the next a handful of samples—"This for the overstuffed chairs, and this for the kitchen curtains, and this chintz for the slip cover for the couch in Mother and Dad's room"—and the next, an armful of squeaky-stemmed, heavy-headed tulips, rose, with deep cool centers of smoky blue.

"How glorious!" said Jill.

"You can't imagine how lovely they are against the

dark green of the cedars there along the front of the house," said Mrs. Dale, drawing off her gloves. "McTavish was highly incensed at the idea of my picking them. Shall I put them in the window where they get the sunlight?"

"We've got Duncan Phyfe chairs to go one on each side of the lowboy," said Mr. Dale. "They're lovely things—just what we should have had for the parlor here."

"We're going to resurrect great-great-great-uncle Ned," Randy told her, "and hang him over the mantel."

"But wasn't he a shocking old rascal really?" said Jill doubtfully. "He cheated the Continental Congress out of some money, didn't he? And anyhow, he's so homely. *His* nose was 'like a tower of Lebanon,' if ever a nose was!"

"Yes," assented her father seriously, but with a twinkle in his eye, "that's quite true, but you see, my innocent child, if you have an ancestor in oils you hang him over the mantel. If you haven't, you buy one. Jewel offered to get us one."

"But we thought we'd rather have our own old rascal than somebody else's," added Randy cheerfully.

"It really doesn't matter about his being so ugly," —from Susan—"because the picture's so dark that you can't see much but his yellow chin and his white

lace ruffle anyhow. Oh, Jill, the new lantern came for over the front door. It looks much better, like a really old one."

"Is it an antique?"

"No," said Mrs. Dale, "it's a reproduction. Like the house." She rose and stood looking down at them, slapping her gloves thoughtfully against her palm. "I suppose you all realize," she went on, "that you're leaving the real thing and moving into a modern reproduction of it? This old house of ours—built in 1771, you know—is just what they're copying in all these new 'colonial houses.' Randy dear, you're sitting on my coat."

There was a little startled pause. Randy got off the coat mechanically and handed it to his mother.

"But it's nice and new!" ventured Susan.

"And big enough. We're so blooming crowded here——"

"And it's in Chestnut Hill!"

"Yes, it's all of that," Mrs. Dale smiled down on their upturned faces. "Jack, don't look so distressed. I do like it—immensely—but I want them to be able to tell the real from the imitation."

The mumps seemed to Jill to linger on forever. Characteristically, every contagious disease Jill took —measles, chicken pox, scarlet fever—she took harder than anyone else. Even after the swelling had subsided, a low fever kept her, ill and miserable,

in bed. Out of doors spring came on, and life—at school, at home, in the new house—moved forward without her. Everyone was wonderfully kind to her, bringing books and flowers and notes, but they were all too busy with their own affairs to be much with her, and the days were long and lonely.

The house was strangely quiet. Most of the time the older children were away, at school or at Graylock. Mrs. Dale worked away in what Beverley called the "antic," going through old trunks and sorting over the accumulations of twenty-one years. Even Lura in the kitchen was almost subdued. She went about her duties without banging the pots and pans or slamming doors or scolding the iceman or the grocer's boy—evidences of good nature so unusual as to be positively portentous. In the afternoons Beverley and his small cronies could be heard shouting over their fleet of sailboats on the creek. Otherwise there was no sound but the rumble of trolleys along the Pike, the occasional toot of a motor horn, or now and then a peal at the front-door bell.

Jill studied her lessons, and worried a little because the class was getting so far ahead of her. When she tired of geometry and Cicero, she watched the new green leaves on the trees beyond the open window rustling and nudging each other in the wind, and found entertainment in small happenings. There was a feud between the robins and the gray squirrels. Both

sides claimed the tree as their own, and each chattered and scolded resentfully at the other. One day Jill saw a plump squirrel embark on a precarious trip across a telephone wire. Halfway over he was attacked by a robin, which saw its enemy for once at a disadvantage. There he was, poor little creature, stranded in the middle of a very slender wire, while above him and around him a furious bird flapped its wings and squawked and made darting rushes at his soft body with a strong sharp bill. Jill held her breath, while the little furry thing slipped, caught himself, dodged, and crept slowly toward the tree, still badgered and pecked by his enemy every swaying step of the way. There was also the affair of the bees. Dabney sent a big pot of white hyacinths, and five bees buzzed in through the window, drank immoderately of its nectar, and promptly became intoxicated. Two of them recovered and flew away again, sadder and—Jill trusted—wiser, but three never woke out of their drunken slumber.

Jill, propping a book on her knees, tore a page out of her school notebook and wrote of these events to Billy. She covered both sides with her round scrawl, squeezed a "Yours, Jill," down in the lower corner, and read over the finished production with growing disfavor. Compared with Billy's letters, which were written in his neat, strong hand over two folders of gray paper embossed with the class seal in gold, it

looked untidy and slovenly. Heaving a great sigh, she pulled out a fresh sheet of paper and copied it carefully, editing as she went along the number of dashes and exclamation points. She folded it into a hard square, slipped it into an oblong envelope too large for it, wrote with a flourish across the uneven surface, "Cadet William Wyeth," and hid it in a book until Susan could be got to mail it. Either of the boys was likely to make pseudo-humorous remarks about the extra burden which the West Point correspondence was putting upon the postman.

At last the doctor let her get up. The Board of Health men came and took down the yellow sign from the front door. She could go back to school. But the eagerness to be up and doing which had made her so restless when she was kept in bed, vanished, now that she could dress and come—rather totteringly—downstairs. She felt tired and listless.

"I'll never catch up!" she said despairingly. "Never."

They were all sitting around the dining-room table, all five of them, playing Sir Hinktum Funnyduster, an old game of their mother's childhood.

"Hold your cards up, Bev," said Randy. "I can see everything that's in your hand. You'll catch up all right, Jill—you get A's without doing a lick of work."

Mrs. Dale, passing through the room, stopped to put her hand on Jill's forehead.

"You really aren't fit to go back to school," she said. "You look white and pindling, as they say in the country. A week or two at Atlantic City is what you need."

Atlantic City. For a second Jill seemed to smell the raw salt air, hear the roll and pound of the breakers, feel the steady motion of the wheel chairs on the boardwalk. Just to sit still and be trundled along, without any effort of her own, while ocean and shops and people flowed monotonously past and the wind blew in her face that mingled aroma of salt and sand and popcorn and taffy that is Atlantic City!

"Oh, Mother!" she said. Then, "Oh, I couldn't possibly. I've got more work to make up now than I can do. Another week away would make it just that much worse."

"What was the name of that perfectly splendid woman who took the Wood child to Atlantic City last year after she had the grippe and tutored her there? Miss Kitchin or Potts or Bacon—something culinary, I know. I remember Sue had just had her tonsils out, and I felt that I'd give anything to be able to send her away, too, but we simply could not make it. The operation was enough."

"You were always smashing the family pocketbook, weren't you, ducky?" said Randy to Sue. "Tonsils, and teeth straightened, and so on. You seem to have lost your ingenuity now that we've got

plenty of money. Don't you feel the need of some expensive glasses—horn-rimmed spectacles would look great on you—or having your face lifted, or a new nose or something? Have an appendix on the fortune!—It's somebody's turn to play. Mums, you sit down and take Bev's hand—he's too young for this highbrow game."

"I couldn't go with you myself just now, anyhow," went on Mrs. Dale, evidently still in Atlantic City. "Hush, Bev! When you roar that way you make people think that Randy's right and you *are* a baby! I believe I'll telephone Mrs. Wood and ask her—— Let him play till his bedtime, Randy. I want to speak to Dad."

Jill went to Atlantic City, with Miss Potts and a pile of school books. They stayed at one of the big beach-front houses—Jill's first experience of the luxury of a large and expensive hotel. She enjoyed the long carpeted corridors lined with silent doors, the great dining room with its small white tables and hurrying, obsequious waiters, the wide lobbies, palm-decorated, strewn with overstuffed chairs in groups and with expensive, fashionably dressed people who looked at one another incuriously, the entrance with its heavy glass doors and its blue and gilt doorman.

They spent their mornings on the piazza upstairs which was built out almost over the boardwalk. It was

like being on the deck of a ship. The porter brought them steamer chairs and wound them tightly in rugs, and there they lay, with the ocean spread out before them, blue-green and shining in the sunshine, foaming white at the edge where the long line of breakers churned and slid. On the wide strip of tan beach children played, scattering hastily when a troop of horseback riders came cantering along. When the children came in at meal times with sandy knees and tin buckets and shovels in their hands, Jill felt her sixteen years heavy upon her. It was dreadful to be too old to play in the sand!

With Miss Potts to help her, Jill found that the Latin and geometry and French went quickly. They did not work at any one thing long enough to tire of it, and they stopped often to look at a steamer far out on the horizon with its smoke trailing behind it like a long gray pennant, or a sea gull rising and swooping over the waves, or to comment on the stream of people, old and young, vigorous and feeble, thin and fat and tall and short, that flowed in a never-ending stream along the boardwalk below them.

In the evenings, after dinner, they would put on warm wraps and join the throng for a brisk walk before bedtime. There were such contrasts: the black glistening ocean, tumbling under the stars, the stretch of quiet beach with here and there a lonely, impersonal figure—and the boardwalk, lighted with its

gaudy electric signs, the gay shop windows, filled with gowns and hats and Chinese rugs, with cigarettes and machines pulling long pink strands of taffy, with jewelry, Madeira lunch cloths, Japanese gongs. Then they would go back to the hotel, drowsy from the fresh spring night air, and would go to sleep with the roar of the sea in their ears.

Jill soon felt like herself again. The color came back to her cheeks, her eyes grew bright, and her usual vim and enthusiasm returned. She walked to the inlet, she went out to the end of the Steel Pier, she got her shoes full of sand tramping on the beach, she won an unspeakably hideous teacup at ping-pong, had her picture taken on a postal, and looked at the shop windows till the sight of salt-water taffy made her ill and Madeira doilies gave her—she said—a "swift pain." Atlantic City was beginning to pall.

A big batch of letters came from home for her. Things were happening, and they all wrote to tell about them.

Jill opened her father's first.

Well, angel child [it ran, in the clear vigorous hand which she tried unsuccessfully to imitate], how are you getting along? Learning much, I trust, and not running Miss Potts to a frazzle. We all miss you like a front tooth, and long to wire you to come home at once, but Mother thinks you'd better stay till Saturday. We'll send 'Enry for you then.

We'll be moving soon now. The tenants—Mother says she is telling you about them—want to get into Tangle Garden right

away. The new house is practically ready for us, and so there's no need to wait. The guest rooms haven't been touched yet, and the built-in bookcases in the library are wrong and have to be torn out, but we can move in and get those details adjusted afterward. Your four-poster bed is not ready either, so you will have to begin with a makeshift. Otherwise everything is done and done well. I'm sure you will like it. It's a little decorator-y at present, but we'll soon live that down.

I almost forgot my chief piece of news. Lura is kicking up her middle-aged heels and taking unto herself a husband! He's younger than she is, and one of the very dapper darkeys. The wedding is to come off to-morrow night, and the b. and g. are to live in a three-story, three-room house—one room to a story—on Peaceable Street, furnished almost entirely out of our attic. We feel rather worried about it, and we have tried to dissuade Lura from entering upon this very uncertain matrimonial venture, but it is a little difficult to baldly tell a prospective bride, who is blushing romantically under the black, that her beau is more in love with her savings than with her.

Lura is going to be too busy taking care of Pink (that's the name of her spouse-to-be) to work for us, and so your mother spent yesterday in a den of stupidity called an intelligence office acquiring a crew of servants to man Graylock. It takes a lot.

We are getting more stylish every day. Come home before we reach the point where you can't recognize us.

So glad you are feeling better, chicken, and that the old ocean is as nice as ever.

Best love.
DAD.

Ted, in his haste, scribbled all over the back of an engraved dinner invitation:

DEAR OLD JILL:

News! News! Lashin's and lavin's of it! Lura is going to be married—at fifty—in some kind of transparent blue stuff! We've

tried to tell her that Pink (he's blacker than she is, if possible) is only marrying her for her money, but we quail before the happiness that blinks out from behind those big goggles of hers. She evidently thinks she's a match for any man—limp and goggles and blue dress and all. Talk about feminine vanity! She didn't want to be married with you away, but Pink is in a hurry. Guess he wants to have it all settled before the first of the month. Lots more to tell you if I had time. We move Friday. Tenants—people named Jones, twin daughters with moon faces and magenta hair, worse than Randy's—move in Saturday, etc., etc. Better come home.

Love,
TED.

Sue's covered an 8 x 11 sheet of bond paper with amateur typewriting, variously spaced.

DEAREST JILL¾—

This is Ted8s new typewriter; he says he has to use it for his college English papers but he hasn't yet and so I'm learning. It might be useful someday if I ever needed to get a job.

Lura's getting married to-morrow night. She's going to have the weddings at her sister8s house. Mother told her she'd pay for it. She's going to wear a pale blue organdie dress and a veil—can you *imagine* it? We're going to give her flowers and things, and she8s getting a cake from a caterer with love birds in icing on the toq. We'll miss hre really. She's not going to work for us any more. Ted said, 'Well now we can have white servants,' and Randy was simply raging. He almost fought Ted about it and Dad sent him away from the table. Randy said Ted was thinking of nothing but style and not about whether porr old Lura was going to be happy. I think she will—it must be nicer to have a house of your own than to wark in somebody else8s.

Randy and I are going out to dinner to-morrow. You and Ted were invited too but Ted's going to a dance in town and of course

you are away. You know that Mrs. Anderson who lives in the big house with the pillars on the Pike? Her neice was visiting her last June and you invited her to come over on Saturday night and dance and she wouldn't let the neice come. We thought it was a trumped-up excuse, but I don't think now it was. She's awfully nice. We met her at the post-office yesterday and she asked us. It's another neice this time.

We're going to move soon because the people who are renting this house want to get right in. It's funny to think of anybody else living in our house, but they're only renting it. And anyhow we have the new one. There are two girls, twins, about my age. Isn't that funny?

We got all your postals. We miss you terribly. Loads and loads of love.

SUE.

And Randy wrote:

DEAR JILL,

You're a lucky bum to be at the seashore and out of all this moving fuss. Wish I'd gotten the mumps. You're out of this Anderson party too. Mrs. Anderson has lived on the Pike for about five years and always has looked through us. Now that we've got a lot of money, and cars and a new house, she comes swimming up to Sue and me at the P. O. all coos and smiles and asks us to dinner. Might have thought from the way she fell on our necks that we were long-lost relatives. It makes me sick. Sue doesn't see it. She thinks Mrs. A. is just lovely. Yah.

We're leaving our furniture for the tenants to use. It isn't good enough for the new house. It was good enough for me. Good enough for Mother, too, I'll bet a hat, but she doesn't say anything.

Come home before we forget you. We sort of miss vour sweet mug.

Yours,
RANDY.

Tenants, moving, Mrs. Anderson! Jill turned to her mother's letter, which she had been saving till the last, to clear up the confusion.

JILL DARLING, just time for a hasty note. We've had your various postals and your nice long letter and enjoyed them so much. I am so glad that you are feeling better and that you are making progress with your work. I believe that I've enjoyed the being able just to send you off to Atlantic City when you needed the change so badly more than anything else we've done with "the fortune."

Things have been moving swiftly here at home during the last few days. In the first place, we have tenants for Tangle Garden. They are a family named Jones, strangers in Philadelphia, and they want a place not too far from the city to spend the summer. Someone—a friend of the Scotts', I think—told them we were leaving, and they came and asked to rent it from us furnished until October or November. It really seemed an ideal solution, for I did not like to think of the old house standing here empty and neglected. It should have someone to love it. There are two daughters, twins, about Susan's age, and I think they will enjoy the garden and the swimming hole. They seem to be very jolly, good-natured little tomboys. Ted, who is really becoming impossibly critical, scorns them because they are not pretty.

I think we shall move into the new house on Friday. It will be a very simple moving, merely a question of trunks and suitcases. Now about your coming home. If you think it would be easier, you can wait till Saturday, when 'Enry will get you and take you straight to the new house. Or if you want to spend one more night in Tangle Garden, come on Thursday. In either case, Miss Potts had better go on tutoring you till the end of the week, so that you can go back to school on Monday thoroughly pre-

pared. Do just whichever seems pleasanter to you. We'll be most awfully glad to see you when you do come.

The others have probably told you about Lura. Poor old soul, I suppose she's entitled to her romance, if she thinks she can get it, but I'm afraid she is destined to be very unhappy before it's over. We are trying to make her wedding just as she wants it in every detail. We shall miss her more than we realize.

Bevvy says to give you his love. He's very sleepy, but I gather from his murmurings that a steamboat and an anchor would be acceptable. I must put him to bed.

Good-night, dear, and lots of love

From
MOTHER.

Jill went home on Thursday. Tangle Garden seemed already to belong to someone else. All the personal things of the Dales had been packed away, the books and photographs, the various trophies and treasures. Everything was cleared and swept, and the wind blew through the rooms without finding a magazine to ruffle or a vase of flowers to tip over. Lura was gone, and the new cook, a red-cheeked Irishwoman, moved briskly about the kitchen. Jill tried to imagine the Jones twins reading on the sofa, looking out of the window at the moon, walking along the creek and wondering how soon it would be warm enough to go in swimming, but her mind shied away from the thought.

The trunks went on Friday morning. 'Enry took the coupé. The Red Imp had been left in the new

garage the day before. The seven Dales piled into the big sedan.

It looked very pretty, the old house which they were leaving. The wind that rippled across the creek and the misty fresh green of the garden stirred in the big trees and made with their leaves a shifting pattern of light and shade on the walls of the old stone house. Along the driveway the border of violets which Jill and Susan had brought from the woods was blue with blossom. Two big cherry trees scattered white petals like snow over the spring-house roof.

Everyone was silent as the car turned slowly out of the driveway.

"Let's sing!" said Mrs. Dale suddenly. "Start something, Jill."

"All we like sheep have gone astray," began Jill.

"Baa, baa, baa," chorused the others.

CHAPTER XI

GRAYLOCK

JILL and McTavish became fast friends. The crusty old Scotsman merely tolerated the rest of the family, but Jill he seemed positively to like. At the approach of Ted or Randy or Sue he would say dourly, "I doubt ye'll be wanting some flowers again. Aweel, I'll get them for ye later, but I canna be fashed now," and turning his back would go about his business. But when Jill came wandering across the grass, negligently chewing the stem of a flower which she had picked from his most cherished bed, the old man's stone blue eyes would soften and a fleeting expression which, if he had had more practice, might have been a smile would lighten that grim part below his long nose. He even found time to stop and talk to her, and Jill, on her part, enjoyed the quaint bits of folklore or the homely philosophy which he would deliver in his rough Scots tongue.

One Saturday morning in May, Jill sat cross-legged in the sunshine on the edge of the tiled swimming pool while McTavish thumped down blocks of the fine turf that had been brought to border it. Against

the gray-green line of Lombardy poplars which served to screen the pool from the lawn a clump of azaleas flamed rose, and tall, pale tulips in a row nodded in the light breeze.

"I used to think," observed Jill, "that just beauty alone was enough to make people happy. Why, if just Saturday morning and sunshine on the grass used to be enough to make my heart feel like a balloon on a string, you'd think all this"—she waved a pansy in a wide gesture that took in pool and poplars and vine-covered pergola—"would make me simply wild with joy. But it doesn't. My heart feels like a—like a cold boiled potato."

"You're growin' older," ventured McTavish, "or maybe something will have gone wrong?"

"No, nothing special. Except that I've overdrawn my bank account! I never saw anything vanish as my allowance has!"

McTavish carefully fitted the last piece of sod into place before he answered: "It's no' only the gettin' o' the money," he said at last. "It's the keepin' it."

This, Jill was willing to agree, was one of the eternal truths. But she had already heard it in various forms from the bank and from her parents, and she was beginning to be bored with it. She deftly changed the subject.

"Look at that huge spider there!" She leaned forward to obstruct his path with the tip of her pansy,

and then drew back shudderingly, for he was a particularly large and active spider, dust-brown, and evil-looking. "Thet's a long-leggited beastie, all right," she said. "Tell me that verse again, McTavish —the one that you said was in the Scotch litany."

> "From ghoulies and ghosties [began McTavish],
> And long-leggited beasties,
> And things that go 'Boomp!' in the night,
> Good Lord, deliver us!

"Now, Miss Jill, if you'll juist move away a bit, I'll finish trimming that edge."

Jill rose slowly to her feet. "I suppose," she remarked, dusting off her skirt, "that I'd better go write my composition for Monday, just in case I should go to the polo game this afternoon. McTavish, have you ever seen a ghoulie?"

"Well, not precisely, Miss Jill, but——"

"I'm wondering if it's a ghoulie that's bothering me now—a ghoulie or a blue devil. I must ask 'Enry if he's ever seen one."

She swung off toward the house, chuckling to herself at the imagined conversation with the literal 'Enry.

"'Enry, have you ever seen a ghoulie?"

"A ghoulie, miss? No, miss."

As she came across the slope of lawn she looked up at the house with the little feeling of surprise that

always came when she looked at the new home which the Fortune had bought, surprise that the Dales, big, shabby, casual family that they were, could be living in that great pile of stone and glass and painted wood, handsome and formal as a church. Some day, she supposed, she would be used to it, would take it for granted. They had not lived there long enough yet to feel that it really belonged to them.

Jill crossed the driveway and opened the side door. On the threshold she looked back. It *was* beautiful. There were all the spring shades of green—the emerald of the lawn, the flickering gray-green of the poplars, the dark green, almost black, of the hedge of cedars that shut out the house next door—and here and there against the green were masses of color: the flame of azaleas, the white of spiræa, the purplish pink of Judas trees.

At home—at Tangle Garden—the lilac would be in bloom—huge overgrown bushes that made the dining room dim—and the columbine, pink and purple, would be scrambling over the low boards that held the garden beds; the dandelions on the lawn would have turned to white puffs and would be scattering and gleaming in the sunshine.

With a sudden burst of energy Jill pushed open the door and shut it briskly behind her.

Indoors the house seemed still less to belong to her. She was proud of its spaciousness and elegance—the

elegance of wide archways, of soft rugs, of dark, graceful furniture, of fireplaces, of old brass and cool etchings—but it had all been selected by somebody else, somebody who didn't know the Dales. In the evenings, when all their things were spread about, Dad's papers and pipe, Ted's golf bag sagging drunkenly by the door, the signals of Beverley's electric train, Randy's school books, and Sue's sweater, and Jill's hat, when everybody was ready for dinner, calling to Jill to "hurry up," then it would feel like home. She would come flying down the broad stairs, and hold out her wrists to her mother or Sue to tie the ribbons at her cuffs, while Sally, who was generally there, would walk about admiring all the pretty things. It was happy and jolly. But in the morning everything was quiet and neat and empty; there was nothing but the sunlight through the ferns and one of the maids silently dusting and polishing.

The library door was shut, and low voices came from within. Ted had been driving the Red Imp too fast, had been coming home too late, and Dad had summoned him into the library to "speak" to him about it. Depressed by that closed door, Jill hurried past and galloped up the stairs, two steps at a time.

At the top she paused a moment to look at herself in the big mirror in the hall. She saw a green silk sports frock, with green suède jacket negligently open above it, brief skirts which showed the bend of

her knee in the back, ankles abnormally slender, and feet abnormally large in the fashionable flat-heeled sports shoes with flapping tongues. Her hair was tied back with a green velvet ribbon, from which the short ends broke away to curl around her face. It was long enough to put up now, but this was Saturday morning—and it was quicker to tie it back! Jill mechanically straightened the seam of her stocking and pulled her skirt down before she went into her room.

It was a large affair—all of the eight master's bedrooms of the advertisement were large—and when it was finished would be most luxurious, with the thick soft gray-blue rugs (Jill at first had discarded her satin mules and rapturously padded about on that furry rug in her bare feet), the canopied four-poster bed, tall chest of drawers, low dressing table, chintz-covered couch and easy chairs, but as yet it was unfinished. The bed, after innumerable petty delays, had still not come, and in its place was the chipped white iron one from the old house, looking absurdly small and shabby among all the rich new things. There were no curtains, nor lamp shades yet, either; the decorator explained to Jill that she must see the bed in place before she could "sense" what draperies the room craved for complete fulfilment. "I can *sense* already that she doesn't think flame-colored curtains will vibrate with the rest of it," said Jill to Sally.

But by this time she was willing to give up any color scheme she ever cherished for the sake of having the room finished. "It gives you such a restless feeling to live in a room that's only half done!" she complained. "And it's too great a strain on my imagination to keep on picturing this room with a real bed instead of that sad white iron object!"

Opening out of Jill's room was a little bathroom, all green and white and silver, like some deep sea grotto, and beyond it, Susan's room, fresh and cool in rose and green. Susan was there now, singing, "The bear went over the mountain," with great vigor. Jill started to call to her, and then decided to get down to work instead. An idea had come to her for her composition. She sat down at the desk by the window, scribbled the title, "Our Scotch Gardener" on a piece of paper, and there she stuck.

The wind blew in through the open window. Jill, cupping her chin in the palm of her hand, leaned over the broad sill and looked out. On the lawn below Beverley was playing with his wheelbarrow. She could see over the hedge of cedars into the place next door. It had a long lawn, too, with banks of rhododendrons, and the house was a big, half-timbered one of the English type. Jill wondered what kind of people lived there. Over the English gables and beyond them she could see the White Marsh Valley. It dropped away, distant and beautiful, a

place of tiny woods and meadows and ploughed fields, of toy houses and roads like ribbons, and wee, square barns.

Jill called up the small annoyances that were spoiling the loveliness of the day for her: Ted's silliness about the car and their father's unaccustomed sternness, the delay in the decorating of her room, the uncertainty about this afternoon's plans, the composition to be written, and the overdue letter from Billy. What pinpricks they all were really! She remembered a Japanese proverb which her mother had found for her one day—

> It is because we are in Paradise
> That all things in this world trouble us.
> When we go out of Paradise
> Nothing hurts, for nothing matters.

"Miss Jill," said Rosie, the newest maid, "you're wanted on the telephone."

Perhaps that was Dabney now!

"Thank you, Rosie."

Rosie stood aside to let Jill rush past; Jill swerved to avoid Rosie. They collided. "I'm *not* used to servants!" Jill told herself ruefully as she scudded down the hall to the table where the telephone was.

"Hello, Jill? This is Peg."

Not Dabney, after all. Peg lived on the Pike and was one of the old crowd who used to dance in the

Dales' living room, and swim in their swimming hole, and sit on their spring-house roof and sing.

"Doing anything this afternoon?" pursued Peg.

"I—well, Peg, I really don't know!" If Dabney's grandfather was well enough, he was going to take Dabney and Jill to the polo game. "You see——"

"Well, you may not know it, but you are! We're going for a hike, all of us, and the new people at your house. Cross-country hike, fire, hot dogs, marshmallows—you know! Start from Tangle Garden at three sharp and go up the creek. We'll be expecting you, so don't forget. And tell Sue."

"But, Peg——"

"No buts. You must come really. I'm in a huge hurry. Can't talk any more. See you later."

Peg, explosive and dictatorial, rang off. Jill frowned. You might as well try to argue with an express train as with Peg Manners. If Dabney shouldn't be able to go to the polo game, then the hike would be all right. They were fun, those hilarious tramps through the woods and fields, with a bonfire at the last, which toasted frankfurters, marshmallows, and faces alike.

The telephone buzzed shrilly.

"Hello—Jill?"

It was Dabney this time. Her grandfather's cold was much better. They'd call for Jill about half-past two. It was an East Indian team, and it ought to be a good game.

It was not easy to explain to Peg. Her voice sounded offended, as if Jill had deliberately broken an engagement with her in order to accept a more alluring invitation.

"I couldn't seem to ram it into her head," said Jill despairingly to Sue, "that Dabney had asked me long before *she* did. You fix it up this afternoon for me, Sukey."

Jill had never seen polo played. She had been to many a football, soccer, and basket-ball game, sitting tense upon the wooden stand with a steamer rug over her knees, or balancing a folding chair on the slope of a slippery race track and hanging over the railing, uncomfortable and absorbed, and she had come home to discuss the plays with an eager technical knowledge which even her brothers respected. The game was the thing.

But a polo game, she found, was a social matter. She was surprised to see the immense number of expensive cars, the handsomely dressed people, who all seemed to know each other, that gathered at the polo grounds.

Within the white picket fence were little groups of people, laughing, talking, shaking hands, breaking up and forming other little groups. Everybody seemed to know Dabney's grandfather; he was a conspicuous figure, with his height, his shining white hair and beard, his broad-brimmed leghorn hat with the white

scarf around it, his blackthorn cane. Jill, acknowledging introductions, looking eagerly about her at the long green field, the people, the grandstand and its flags, still found time to be thankful that her clothes were all right. Her sports suit of rose-colored wool crêpe and the soft felt hat pulled down over her golden hair were as chic as any of the costumes she saw.

This was fortunate, for there is nothing like the consciousness of being well dressed for giving a woman, young or old, confidence in herself, and Jill's at that moment needed bolstering. It seemed as if she were the only stranger in a large gathering of old friends.

A few of the players came out from the stables at the far end of the field and rode about swinging their mallets and knocking balls to one another.

"We'd better go around to our places," said Mr. Baird.

Their box was directly in the center. Behind it the grandstand rose upward in tiers, and people were beginning to fill up the long, hard benches. It was infinitely more stylish, Jill perceived, to sit in a box (which was a quite simple affair with a splintery wooden railing about it) than to perch upon the grandstand seats, and infinitely more stylish to perch upon the grandstand seats (which people made more endurable by renting leather cushions to sit on at fifteen cents for the afternoon) than to stand in a

mass along the fence, as a rather heterogeneous collection of men and boys were doing.

The game was late in beginning, and there was a good deal of visiting back and forth among the boxes. Much of what was said had little meaning for Jill: the number of ponies the visiting team had brought, the names of those who were playing on the home team, bits of gossip about the management of the visitors. So she smiled when anyone looked at her, and was utterly thrilled by the color and the movement and the gaiety. She was so absorbed in it all that when one of a group who had come up spoke to her she started with surprise.

"Whose daughter are you?" the man was saying. He was a very precise, elderly gentleman with a goatee, who was dressed all in pearl gray from his hat to his spats.

"John Rutherford Dale is my father," said Jill politely.

"Ah," said the old gentleman, and added, after a pause, "And what does he do?"

Jill, feeling a little uncomfortable, said that he was a lawyer.

"Ah, yes. Not descended from the famous Richard Dale of Philadelphia, who was an ensign with Paul Jones on the *Bon Homme Richard*, I suppose?"

"No, I'm afraid not," said Jill, smiling. "My father's people were from New York State."

"Ah, yes," said the old gentleman, losing interest. "Indeed. Very interesting."

He turned to Dabney with some quip about her car, leaving Jill with the feeling that she and her family had been somehow inadequate.

"Of course," she reminded herself, amused at the thought, "we're strangers here in Philadelphia. We've only lived here twenty-one years."

She was glad when the game began and the people who knew one another so well and expected her to be descended from famous Philadelphians went back to their own boxes. After the first whistle she forgot all about them.

They made a vivid picture, those graceful rushing figures on the green field. The East Indians, big, dark-skinned, black-bearded men, wore yellow jerseys and yellow turbans, and the Americans were slender and pale in comparison, with their lean, shaven faces and light blue blouses. The horses were beautiful creatures, chestnut, bay, white, black, and they seemed to enjoy the game as keenly as did the men. Jill, though she knew nothing of the fine points of it, followed the game with tense interest. It was so swift. Mallets click, the ball spins down the field, horses pound along the turf with thudding hoofs, the ball bangs against the wood at the edge of the field, the whistle shrills, the players rap out commands to each other. One man rides harder than all the rest, swings

his long mallet in a back-hand stroke, and sends the ball back again. Two men gallop for it; one of them hooks it neatly away from the other, rises in his stirrups, dribbles the ball along; one of the opposite team comes forging across the field to cut him off; he swings his mallet hard and—a man waves a red flag It is a goal. They are hardly off again before a bell rings. The first chukker is over.

Jill settled back to breathe.

"Like it, Jill?" said Dabney.

"Love it! Tell me . . ."

Between chukkers men with tampers swarmed out over the field to replace the pieces of turf which the horses had kicked up. Clump, clump, clump. They had not nearly finished when the second chukker began, and they had to run to get out of the way.

The small boys and chauffeurs standing by the fence began to make comments on the teams and shout encouragement to them. The beards of the East Indians seemed to tickle their sense of humor.

"Watch out, Whiskers!" as one splendid fellow came galloping down the field with an American in close pursuit. "Here comes the barber!"

"Go to it, King Tut!"

"Mind the sheik!"

There was one Englishman with the visiting team, one of the lean, high-nosed Britons, with that unmistakable air of superiority which is so irritating to

the ordinary American. He came in for his share of the good-natured admonitions.

"'It it, 'Orace, 'it the bloomin' ball!" howled one humorist.

The score in the last chukker stood six to six. How it ended, Jill never knew, for just two minutes before the end the prettiest pony and the best player on the American side went down. Fell with a twist and a confusion of kicking legs that brought horror into Jill's eyes. News drifted back through the crowd as they slowly pushed their way to their respective cars.

"Broken shin—no, nothing worse."

"He fell free, but the pony kicked him in its struggles . . ."

"First thing he said when he regained consciousness was to ask about his pony . . ."

"They shot it at once, of course . . ."

It took a long time to get home, for there were so many cars winding slowly out of the grounds and down the steep hill. The late afternoon lights were lovely when they reached the bridge over the Schuylkill. In one direction the river, placid and winding, reflected the wooded banks and the blue sky; in the other the rose and gold of the sunset touched with mystery the dim smoke and black chimneys of an ironworks.

There was no one about when Jill reached home. Her father and mother had gone out to dinner, Ted

was busy with some fraternity activities, Randy was not yet home, and Beverley, who immediately attached himself to her, was too young.

"Sue?" she called. "Sue, are you back?"

Sue was in her room, soberly pulling burrs off her tweed skirt.

"Have a good time on the hike?" said Jill perfunctorily. "Sue, I——"

"Yes, pretty good, Jill." Sue also wanted to talk. "I saw your composition on your desk. Don't call it 'Our Scotch Gardener.'"

"What *under* the sun!" said Jill wonderingly. "Why not?"

"I'm afraid people will think you're putting on airs."

"Putting on airs? Mad, quite mad! What ever gave you an idea like that? You look kind of down in the mouth, Sue. What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong. Only we've got to be careful, with all this new money, or people will misunderstand——"

Jill pulled off her hat and hung it on a bedpost. Evidently something had happened to hurt Sue's feelings. She put her hands on the younger girl's shoulders and forced her down into a chair.

"Now, then," she commanded, standing over her, "look me in the eye and tell me what's eating you."

"Well, it's nothing, only I overheard Peg and

Grace talking this afternoon, and they said that now we were wealthy you'd thrown over the old crowd to run after high-hat new friends like Dabney."

Jill's eyes blazed. "Well, of all the rotten things! High-hat new friends! My *word!* I hope you told them I knew Dabney when we were poor?"

"No, I couldn't very well. They weren't talking to me. I couldn't burst in and say I'd overheard them."

"I would have," interrupted Jill. "I suppose Peg thinks I broke a date with her this morning to go with Dabney, but I tried to explain—— Oh, bother!"

She went to the window and rapped her finger nails against the pane.

"You don't really think they think I'd drop the old people and go racing off after high-hat people on account of our money?" Jill was growing incoherent. "They *couldn't.* We aren't that kind."

"That's what they said," repeated Sue.

Jill felt suddenly very old and calm and cynical. "I suppose we'll just have to expect to be misunderstood!" she said, and felt a little scared at the thought.

CHAPTER XII

THE YOUNG DALES GIVE A PARTY

"OH, THERE'S Pietro's wagon!" exclaimed Jill, hanging far out of Sally's bedroom window. "That means spring to me!"

Sally grasped Jill's skirts in mock terror, and then herself knelt beside her on the window seat and leaned far out of the other window. And there, two heads glowing in the sunshine, they rested on their arms and talked to each other beyond the windows, while a climbing rose that covered the Scotts' tiny portico with a mass of fragrant yellow rustled beneath them, and down in the sun-dappled street below a huckster's wagon pulled up by the curb.

The old white horse and the cart with the yellow wheels were a familiar sight on the Pike. Shafts of sunlight touched the prosaic fruits and vegetables spread out in orderly arrangement, and brought out their vivid colors: the deep purple of eggplant, the emerald of green peppers, the blazing vermilion of round, tight tomatoes, the chilly whiteness and greenness of lettuce, the carmine of strawberries, the

silver of onions gleaming in the shadow of a basket of dull pink potatoes. Pietro, the Italian driver, a thick-set man with dirty hands and a cap pulled down almost to meet his brigand's moustache, heaved himself down from the front seat.

"Do you remember all the lemons we bought from him this time last year?" said Jill.

"*Do* I? I guess I squoze them till my fingers were stiff and sticky, and the juice got into all the little cuts and scratches I didn't even know I had."

Across the Pike through the trees Jill could see glimpses of Tangle Garden. The shutters, the window ledges, the old fan doorway of the house had all been freshly painted for the tenants, and against the gray stone and the thick green ivy they looked in their gleaming whiteness like clean white collars and cuffs on a frock. While Jill looked, a girl, red-haired and stocky, came around the corner of the house with her arms filled with boughs of apple blossoms. Jill glowed with indignation. She knew from the direction in which the girl had come which apple tree she had been raiding. They *never* picked the blossoms of the Northern Spy! It was the only tree that bore! But then, Jill remembered, it wasn't her loss if there were no apples on it that fall. She could buy all she wanted from the fruiterer's—polished red ones, wrapped in tissue paper. She pulled her head in from the window and turned around.

"It's time Ted came," she said restlessly. "We've got such heaps of things to do."

Sally, too, drew herself in.

"It's only half-past nine," she said soothingly. "And you really haven't such a heap to do. When you can call in a whole flock of maids and a gardener and a caterer, there isn't much to giving a party. It's a Saturday, too, which gives you all day. Now, *last* year, when we had to make 'steen gallons of lemonade and bake the cake and rewrite the play and rake the costumes out of the attic and rehearse and go into the woods for dogwood, all in one afternoon, then there really was something to do! Tell me everything you've planned."

Jill, who had been spending the night with Sally, moved about the room collecting her effects and dropping them into her suitcase.

"Well," she began, "in the first place, Trower is going to do everything about the dinner—seven courses. Doesn't that sound swank? Twenty-five people are coming and Mother and Dad haven't the ghost of an idea of it. Of course they know we'll celebrate their anniversary somehow, but they probably think it'll be the same kind of home-made affair we usually have. Sally, why don't you pack your things now? You won't get home again to-day."

Sally unfolded herself from her jackknife position and limped stiffly to the closet.

"If it's going to be such a grand party," she said, reaching down to rub the ankle on which she had been sitting, "I suppose I'll need my evening dress—or don't we appear?"

"Yes, we receive people and start them on their way to dinner, and then come out afterward, when they have coffee in the drawing room, to help pass it around."

Every year the young Dales gave a surprise party to celebrate their parents' wedding anniversary. Heretofore these parties had been simple affairs, full of hilarity and makeshifts, and kept a surprise only by Mr. and Mrs. Dale's resolute blindness and deafness during the days beforehand. Sally, almost one of the Dale children, and Billy, when he had been home, had always been in the thick of it.

Last year it had taken the form of a play, written by Jill and presented in the living room by all five and Sally, before an enthusiastic audience composed of Mr. and Mrs. Dale and a few of their oldest friends. The scene was laid in the small Southern town which had been Mrs. Dale's home, and the time was earliest Twentieth Century. The costumes came from the attic, and to add zest to the occasion the girls acted the men's parts while the boys joyously burlesqued the feminine rôles. At the sight of Randy, wasp-waisted and breathless, with a voluminous gored skirt flapping about his heels, a tight white linen stock

mounting to his ears, and a dressy hat with a quill set atop his red head, coquettishly allowing himself to be taught to ride a bicycle, the audience laughed so heartily that they drowned out some of Jill's best lines. They were still laughing when Beverley drew the improvised curtain, and the members of the cast, flushed and beaming, came out to pass the strong lemonade and slightly crumbly cake.

This year, however, it was to be no home-made party, but a dinner, given with all the formality the Dales could muster. There had been many discussions about it, discussions that became at times uncomfortably heated. In former years, when they had been limited to one way of doing things, and that the least expensive, they had all agreed in exercising their ingenuity toward the production of stunning effects with little outlay, but now that lack of funds no longer cut off all ways but one, each of them was eager to wander up the little bypath of his own fancy, and each was resentful of the others' attempts to drag him out. Randy, it is true, accepted with equanimity the general loud veto of his pet scheme (a box party for a big-league baseball game), but later, hearing Jill and Ted talk of caterers and courses and music, he declared hotly that they were "putting on the dog" and spoiling the whole idea of the anniversary party, and refused to take any further interest in it.

"How are you going to amuse all these people

after they get through eating?" inquired Sally practically.

"Music. Ted's got Madame Yolinska. A lot of people Ted knows—their mothers and aunts, that is—have had her for receptions and so on. She's all the rage, and very good. She ought to be good. She costs a young fortune. Why doesn't Ted come? We've got heaps to do."

Sally thumped the cranky catch of her suitcase with her clenched fist to make it stay closed. "What does Madame What's-her-name do? Violin or piano?"

"She sings. As a matter of fact," went on Jill, frowning a little, "I'm not so sure whether having her was a real inspiration or not. Dad doesn't care for sopranos. He simply hates what he calls the 'squawkers' on the victrola records. It was Ted's idea."

The notes of a French horn sounded musically under the window. Jill ran to find Mrs. Scott to say good-bye to her and to tell her that Sally would not be home again until some time the next day.

"We'll send 'Enry for you to-night," she finished.

Susan was with Ted in the car.

"We've got the place cards," she announced, "and I told McTavish——"

"*Told!*" exclaimed Ted. "She really suggested most gently that if it wasn't too much trouble and if he didn't mind awfully and if he could possibly spare a few——"

"I told McTavish to bring up a lot of flowers, and I telephoned Trower to change the ice cream to all strawberry instead of strawberry and chocolate, and——"

"Mother and Dad have taken themselves off for the day for a picnic," went on Ted. "Tactful, I calls it."

"They went in Mother's 'coop' and took their lunch in the new picnic case—coffee in the vacuum bottle and chicken salad and knives and forks and plates—and Mother gave one look at it after Delia had got it ready and then looked at Dad and said that it seemed awfully civilized for a picnic——"

"And that she'd be darned," put in Ted to cut down Susan's long-winded tale, "if the old shoe box didn't have more of the picnic spirit!"

"Yes, I can hear your mother saying she'd be darned," chuckled Sally. "Ow!"

Ted pulled the car around a corner with an abruptness that hurled the two on the back seat into a heap in one corner.

"Ted!" scolded Jill. "You *must* drive more carefully."

"That was to put a more reverent spirit into Miss Scott," explained Ted serenely.

They found, when they reached home, that the maids had put extra leaves into the dining-room table, and that McTavish had brought up to the

house some sprays—a very few—of dogwood and Judas tree. Beverley was there all agog to see what was going to happen, while Randy lounged on the back of his neck in an easy chair, reading the latest *Popular Mechanics.*

"McTavish says the garrrden's no' in a condeetion to be rrravished at prrresent," he reported, "and that yon's all the floo-ers he'll consent to have picked. I asked him most politely for a pansy for my buttonhole, and he gave me a look that would have withered a rhinoceros, let alone a sensitive plant like me!"

Nobody paid any attention to him as he drawled on cheerfully and inconsequentially. Jill dropped her hat and coat on the divan, ran her fingers through her hair, and jerked up her stockings with all the precision of a squad of sailors clearing the decks for action.

"Now, then," she said briskly, "we might as well get to work. Ted, you go upstairs and get out the new silver. Randy Dale, stop reading and pitch in. There's the table to set, and the place cards." Her eyes wandered over the room. "Are those all the flowers McTavish brought us? But we've got to have more! We need simply masses of white in those tall jars by the fireplace and over in the corner there. Sue, you be a lamb and go tell McTavish what we want."

The work went forward with all the running about,

the extra trips up and down stairs, the comments and questions, the zest and confusion inevitable on such occasions. Ted brought down the boxes of new silver, Sally volunteered to set the table, Susan departed reluctantly to interview the gardener and returned with two meager handfuls of spiræa, Jill drew a picture of the table on a large sheet of paper and chewed the end of her pencil in bewilderment. Everywhere underfoot, earnest, patient, breathing heavily, was Beverley, his bullet head always between whoever was working hardest and the work that he or she was struggling to do.

In the midst of all the bustle Randy alone took his ease, his feet aloft and his head back, the open magazine before his eyes. His air of good-natured and aloof leisure was intolerably irritating to the workers.

"Just why are you being a lily of the field?" inquired Sally pointedly on her way in from the dining room to find out which of two spoons was designed for the ice cream.

"Come on, Randy," commanded Ted. "Stir your stumps. Don't be a rotten shirk."

Susan, stepping back to admire the spray of spiræa which she had just tucked into a tall gray-green jar, turned her head to say with more asperity than usual, "Oh, don't pay any attention to him. He's just sulking because he didn't get his own way about the party."

Randy brought his feet to earth with a thud.

"No, I'm not," he said definitely. "But I do think it's a washout of a party. Dad and Mother'll just hate it. You see if they don't. Gosh, if any pack of well-meaning idiots gave me a party like that I'd try to be polite about it, but I'd be bored to racking sobs."

"Well, nobody would think of giving *you* a party," said Sue scathingly. "You needn't worry."

"I'm willing to work, though. Here, give me the place cards. I'll write them."

"Ted, don't let him!" cried Jill. She reached out and intercepted the package from the stationer which Ted was handing to Randy. "His handwriting looks as if a lame fly had fallen into the inkwell and then got out and went staggering over some nice white paper." She glanced at the place cards and was silent a moment, aghast. "*Sue*, I told you to get plain ones."

"Well, I thought these were cuter," said Susan complacently.

Everybody crowded around Jill to look at them.

"Let me see, let me see!" reiterated Beverley, pulling down Jill's hand.

"Yoicks," chortled Randy rapturously. Jill and Ted exchanged despairing glances. Sally tried to be tactful. "Why, they're not so bad," she said kindly.

On the place cards of Susan's choice, two kewpies, attired as bride and groom, gazed sidewise with round and coy eyes at each other.

Susan was hurt. "Don't you like them? I can take them back. 'Enry will drive me down, or I can get the trolley car."

"They're awfully cunning, Sue," began Jill carefully, "but——"

"While you're on the Main Street," said Ted, "get some tall wax candles. Delia says ours are all gone."

Jill returned to her diagram. "Get one of the boys to go for you," she said absently. "Ted, do you realize that we invited both the Porters and the Browns, and they've been carrying on a horrible feud for years!"

A few minutes later she noticed that Susan had disappeared but that both of the boys were in evidence. Jill, who never hesitated to demand masculine aid—and always got it—told herself that Sue had no executive ability. She was, nevertheless, a little annoyed with herself that she had not insisted on Randy's doing the errand.

Sally came flying in. "In our humble rustic establishment, we have only two kinds of forks and three kinds of spoons. I don't know how to arrange all these different kinds of tools."

"You begin at the outside and eat in," said Ted the oracle. "I'll come help you."

"Look, Ted," said Jill. "I can't make this come out

even. You see what you can do with it, and I'll help Sally with the table."

"This is all right, Jill. Only you've got five women too many, that's all. I'll mass 'em all down at Dad's end. He can talk to any number of people."

Sue with her packages and the boy from the florist arrived simultaneously. There were three large boxes of flowers. The first, when opened, disclosed water lilies, waxy white, fragrant, dewy; the second, scarlet carnations, fringed and spicy; the third, white roses with stems like tree trunks.

"I got the lilies," said Jill confidently, "to go in the center of the table."

"But, my good woman," declared Ted, "I got the carnations for the center of the table."

"That's," faltered Sue, "what the roses were for."

"Attaboy," said Randy, suddenly taking an interest in what was going on. "Go to it, old dears. May the best man win."

"Of course," said Jill, glaring at Randy, "the roses are perfectly lovely in themselves, but——"

"Oh, Jill," burst out Susan, "do stop being so *tactful!*"

"Well, I wasn't going to be tactful about the carnations. I think they look like—like a sleeve-garter salesman's dinner party!"

"At least they don't look so all-fired bridal," re-

torted Ted, nettled. "Oh, well, have it your own way. Darned if I care. But," he added vehemently, "you'll put water lilies on it over my dead body!"

"Roses it is, then, I guess," said Jill unenthusiastically. "I'll put these in my own room."

She started away with her armful of flowers. Randy put out his foot in her path, and Jill stumbled, staggered, dropped the water lilies, and brought up ankle deep in the box of thorny roses. Another time she might have laughed and gone back to stamp on Randy's feet in retaliation. To-day, however, it seemed the last insult.

"*Ran-dee!*" Her voice trembled. "You don't know how you infuriate me! You haven't done one thing for this party to make it a success. You just criticize and jeer and make things harder. It's disgusting of you. I wish you'd get out."

"All right. I will get out."

"No, you won't," said Ted. "You'll do some work first."

Ted was truculent. He looked as if he were about to seize Randy by the scruff of the neck and make him work. Jill put out her hand.

"Oh, don't," she said. "It's dreadful—our squabbling like this on Mother's and Dad's anniversary. It doesn't really matter what we have on the table—Trowers will see to it that there's plenty to eat—but if we are all unhappy and mad at each other, Mother

and Dad will know it right away and it'll just spoil everything for them. Worse than the red carnations would," she added irrepressibly. "They'd probably think them just funny!"

Randy picked up the scattered flowers. "I'm sorry, Jill," he said, and then, in embarrassment, pulled her hair by way of a caress.

Rosie, announcing lunch, created a welcome diversion. They were all, they discovered, ravenously hungry. The table was set in the sunroom; the glass doors were open on the little circular garden beyond, where tiny box bushes, brought from some old homestead, bordered the half-moon flower beds. The wind, sweeping across the garden from the lawn beyond, brought with it a fragrance of newly cut grass. Under the influence of hot soup and cold salad, twisted nerves smoothed out, voices lost their edge, and jokes and laughter came again that were not received with the shrug of the shoulder and the tired expression that indicate that another personal insult has been stored away in the mind for future reference.

"Put whatever you want on the center of the table," said Ted good-naturedly, as they finished. "I think probably the water lilies would look best. I've got a date with Dabney. Be back early."

He departed whistling, and after him, a few minutes later, went Randy, explaining vaguely that he had something to "see to."

The girls finished the table, which did look lovely, after all, with its linen and silver and crystal, with the wide green glass bowl of water lilies and the tall wax tapers in silver candlesticks.

"Pull down the shades and turn on the lights just foi a moment, Sue," said Jill, "and let's see how it lights up. There," she went on after a minute, "that's just the way I imagined it—all fresh and pretty. Everything's done now. Let's go upstairs and rest."

Something in Susan's drooping figure as she climbed the stairs, one hand on the banister, stirred Jill to compunction. Sue looked tired. Jill remembered how often during the long morning it had been Sue whom they had sent on errands—"Sue, run and do this," and "Sue, trot upstairs and get that." Sue was so willing, so quietly uncomplaining, that they did all tend to impose on her. "She doesna ken how to stand up for hersel', that little one," said McTavish to Jill one day, with just a shade of contempt in his voice.

Jill put Sue to bed, and then she and Sally, having slipped out of their dresses into kimonos, lay on Jill's big new bed together and discussed the party. (It had come at last, that bed, a splendid, large, canopied affair which made Jill feel, she said, like Marie Antoinette.)

"I do think it's going to be a success," said Sally, "and the table is simply divine."

Jill, rested and happy, thought it was. After the various vicissitudes the party was really bidding fair to be what she had imagined it, a pleasant, civilized affair, with the charm of music, of low voices and laughter, of perfect appointments and delicious food, of delightful, well-dressed people. Still thinking of it, she drifted off into a nap.

A cautious tap on the door roused her. She rolled off the bed and went out into the hall to find Ted there, looking like a conspirator, with an expression on his face compounded of amusement and horror.

"Come down and see the monstrosity that Randy has brought home," he whispered. "It's too awful for any words, and he's tickled pink with it. I couldn't tell him what I thought of it."

They crept down the stairs, Jill in her rose-pink dressing gown, her cheeks flushed from her nap, her hair tumbled, her eyes bright.

Randy had moved the water lilies from the center of the table. In their place he had put an enormous wedding cake, a positively colossal wedding cake, which was surmounted by a model, in white icing, of the city's new art museum. Jill thought she discerned a faintly chipped look about the faithfully reproduced rows of steps, and suspected that this objet d'art had spent some time in a shop window.

Randy was beaming. "How's that?" he said proudly.

"Oh, Randy," Jill gasped. "It's lovely," she managed to say; "just lovely!" How could one disappoint him? "It's simply lovely," she repeated. "It's absolutely——" Ted stopped her with a surreptitious pinch.

Randy put his hands in his pockets and wagged his red head in a way that he had when he was pleased. "What you said about my not helping kind of got under my skin," he said. "I guess I was pretty rotten. So, as the main trouble seemed to be the center of the table, I went out and got this. I was in luck to get it. I was afraid you'd have to order a thing like this ahead of time. Looks great, doesn't it?"

Jill and Ted, as soon as they could, escaped to the living room, where they leaned against each other and laughed.

"Get out Sue's kewpie place cards, Ted," said Jill, still giggling. "They go with the centerpiece. And after all, it's their party—Randy's and Sue's—just as much as it is ours. And probably people will enjoy these decorations just as much as the ones that were so—so chastely correct. They'll break the ice."

They dashed to the desk and hastily rewrote the place cards.

"You know, Ted," said Jill, thumping down the blotter on the last one, "this is going to be a good party! I feel it in my bones, and this is the first time to-day that I really have, too!"

It *was* a good party. Jill and Sally, Ted and Randy and Susan, picking up delicious scraps of dinner with whispers and giggles in the pantry, listened to the laughter and chatter from the dining room and knew that it was spontaneous. After dinner Madame Yolinska sang, in her warm and charming voice, some of the songs that had been popular twenty-one years ago when Mr. and Mrs. Dale were married.

When all the guests left, declaring with evident sincerity that they had not enjoyed a party so much in years, Jill, who with Ted and Sally was leaning over the banister listening shamelessly, drew a long breath.

The party was over, and it had been a success.

Mr. and Mrs. Dale did not come upstairs right away. After a time Jill, in slippers and pink kimono, stole downstairs to say good-night to them.

Low voices came from the living room. Jill paused unseen in the doorway.

"Do you remember how absurd Randy looked," Mrs. Dale was saying, "in that old bicycle skirt of mine?"

"Jill had some clever lines in that," mused Mr. Dale, "that scene where . . ."

They were talking about last year's party!

CHAPTER XIII

SUMMER PLANS

SUMMER this year took Jill unawares. It slipped up behind her while she was busy with school and the new house, with Sally and Dabney and the boys. Almost before she had realized that the lilies of the valley, sweet and cool among their damp green leaves, and the hawthorn, feathery clouds of pink, were there, they had fallen and blown away, and the roses had come, stately Marshal Neils and piquant glowing Irish fire-flames in box-bordered patterns in the circular garden, and crimson ramblers rioting over the white pergola by the swimming pool; and in Tangle Garden bunchy pink roses, too heavy for their sharp stems, and tiny deep red ones, spicily fragrant, bloomed among the larkspur and foxgloves in the bee-haunted beds.

The first thing that brought summer vividly to Jill's attention was the departure of the People Next Door to their cottage at "Northeast." One morning their trunks went, rattling and tipping fraternally in the back of the tan suburbanette. The next day Jill

caught a glimpse of two cars in the driveway, of chauffeur and butler fastening the motor trunk on the back of one and stowing away suitcases into the rumble of the other. After that the house was blank and deserted. There were no more lights through the trees at night; no more fragments of sentences (interesting bits without beginning or end, like: "Jerome's girl will if you will," or "after big game in India, but I . . .") or shreds of laughter flung out without thought into the air; no more flashes of a blue and silver roadster on the drive or click of croquet balls and shift of figures on the lawn. Jill missed them, and she was disappointed that they went away so soon before she had had a chance to scrape acquaintance with the girls who seemed to be about her own age, or the boy who was possibly Ted's. Now she would have to wait until fall.

To Jill the People Next Door were a symbol. They had been there, strongly entrenched in the life of Chestnut Hill, when the Dales moved in; they represented to Jill all of those rather dimly seen people, of whom Ted knew a few, of whom Dabney was one, who had had money for a long time, who belonged to all the best clubs, who played polo, who were descended from famous Philadelphians, who tried hard, without success, to keep their names out of the society columns of the newspapers, who knew each other so well that they seemed to speak a different language

that the outsider could not understand. It was too bad that they had gone away for the summer.

Then school stopped. Unofficially, it had ceased for Jill days before, when examinations had begun, from which she was exempt on account of the high marks which she, without much effort, had achieved throughout the year. The formal ending, however, Commencement, took place on the hottest Wednesday that the season had yet produced. Jill, wearing a georgette frock of palest peach color and a floppy hat, sat in the crowded Meeting-house, which seemed, in spite of the Venetian blinds, to glow with a dull green heat, and watched the class above her going through those solemn proceedings which shut the door upon their school life and turned them out into the world. Bible reading, prayer, address; graduation essays, valedictory, address. Throughout the Meeting-house fans moved rhythmically backward and forward. The graduating class, the girls in white frocks and the boys in white flannel trousers and navy blue coats, sat upon the high benches usually occupied by the elders of the Meeting, and looked warm and weary, but exalted.

When the last diploma—two feet long and tied with blue and white ribbons—had been presented, everybody pressed out of the Meeting-house into the blazing afternoon sunlight. The huge old walnut trees, so black of trunk and feathery of leaf, made

sharp-edged patterns on the green of the lawn and the white of the big school building. The graduating class, having marched out with immense dignity, broke ranks beyond the porch and streamed across the grass in chains of four and five, waving their diplomas and calling to each other in an exuberance of relief. Jill and Sally followed them to the gymnasium where the reception was held and where were the ice cream and cake which brought most of the undergraduates to the ceremony. Jill was a Senior now; only one more year, and she would be standing with arms full of flowers in the receiving line, being congratulated, taking her first step out into the future. She longed for that time to come: the year that must first elapse seemed to her a year of marking time. And yet the last twelve months had brought so much, what might the next ones be holding for her?

"What are you going to do this summer?" said Twig later that afternoon, when they all—Jill, Twig, Ted, Dabney, Sally, Randy, Sue, and Bev—sat in a cool and dripping row on the edge of the swimming pool.

"Do?" said Jill, churning the water idly with her feet. "The usual things, I suppose—swim and keep cool and rest my brain."

"Jill overworks her brain in winter," explained Randy without a smile, "and then in summer she gives it a nice long rest. It hibernates all the time from June to September."

He stood up to dive, a tall, thin figure in last year's bathing suit, which was faded and both too short and too loose. Randy had lengthened out amazingly in the last few months, without widening at all, with the result, Jill said, that he looked like a "long drink of water."

"Now I," he began, but got no further, for Ted, reaching around behind Dabney, gave him a shove that spoiled both his speech and his dive. He came up again a second later, his red hair plastered down tight against his forehead, water running off the ends of it into his eyes, and splashing on his upturned nose and pointed chin, and went on speaking as if there had been no interruption, "Now I," he said imperturbably, "am going to have a job."

He climbed up on the edge again, sprinkled some water amiably over Sally, whose blue wool bathing suit had almost dried under the hot sun, looked around for Ted, who had with elaborate unconsciousness got up and walked off beyond easy reach, and then settled his scores pleasantly by sending the innocent Twig sprawling into the pool.

"The same job you were talking about one Sunday evening way last winter?" said Dabney.

"Yes, that's the one. Didn't think you'd remember. Sort of extra boy with a gang of surveyors. Quite good pay and darned good experience. I want to be an engineer."

"I thought you'd all be going away this summer," said Twig, gripping the bar along the edge preparatory to hoisting himself up again.

Ted put a foot on his shoulder and sent him down, gurgling, under the water once more. Jill, perceiving that the boys were beginning to be rough, decided hastily that she would rather go in of her own accord than be thrown in. She scrambled to her feet and ran out on the end of the diving board.

"Look out!" she called to Beverley, who was happily paddling, doggy-fashion, around by himself in the deep end. Poised on the tip of the board she waited a moment for him to get out of the way. Below she could see through the green water, as pale and cool as limes, the pattern of the tiles on the bottom, and the wavering reflection of her slim upraised arms and scarlet bathing suit. She dived, and when she came up again swimming lazily through the scarcely stirred water, she heard Dabney say to Ted:

"Weren't you planning to go abroad?"

"I was planning to get a job on a boat," Ted corrected her. "But I decided that looked too much like work. I think I'll wait and go over properly next year."

"Well, if I'd known that you were all going to be home this summer," put in Twig, "I don't know whether I'd have jumped at that boys' camp offer as I did. Still, it's not bad. All my expenses, plenty

of swimming and riding, and some money besides."

"It must be sizzling here in summer," said Dabney. "It gets hot enough in Cape May."

Jill climbed up the brass ladder at the deep end, feeling her body strangely heavy as she lifted it out of the water into the air.

"How soon do you go, Dabney?" she called. "*Look out, Sue!*"

Sue, with great presence of mind, jumped; Randy, who had been creeping up behind her, skidded on the wet marble and toppled ignominiously after her, going under with a great thrashing of long white arms and legs and a splash that sent waves slapping against all four sides of the pool.

"Next week," replied Dabney. "Some of the maids are down opening up the cottage now. Does anybody know what time it is?"

Nobody did. "Sue, you trot along and find out," said Ted persuasively, who was quite too comfortable, lying on the grass in the sun, to stir.

Sue put on a striped flannel bathrobe over her bathing suit and started toward the house.

"I don't see why I have to be the one who always does the errands!" she protested mildly over her shoulder.

It was true; Sue always did do the errands. Jill remembered in that day alone that Sue had gone out to pick up the morning paper from the driveway, had

done some telephoning which Mrs. Dale had asked Jill to do, had taken their frocks downstairs to Julia to be pressed, had arranged the flowers, had gone down to the Main Street to put all of their allowances in the bank, and had read *The Adventures of Tommy Titmouse* to Beverley to keep him quiet.

"You're a lazy thing, Ted," said Jill severely.

It was easy to impose on Sue. She had a genuinely sweet nature, and she had besides that fatal desire to please which is positively a curse to its possessor. Even the most considerate people cannot help taking advantage of it.

"I'd have gone," said Twig, "if she'd waited half a sec."

"She ought to learn the art of waiting," said Randy. "Somebody'll always do it if you wait long enough. *We* wait, and Sue does it. The more fool Sue!"

"I think you're simply horrid," declared Sally. "I'm going in. I don't care what time it is."

There were bath houses, white and pretty, at each end of the pergola. The girls were half dressed when Sue returned.

"Twenty minutes past six," she reported. "Mother says for everybody to stay to dinner. Delia has made quarts of strawberry ice cream. Jill, chuck your bathing suits out and I'll wring them out for you."

Randy went off to work early the next Monday morning. He was gone before Jill was up, and he got

home just in time to take a swim. He came in late to dinner with his red hair wet and glistening, and he excused himself early and vanished. It was almost as if he were not there at all. Every evening immediately after dinner he disappeared. After several days Jill succeeded in ferreting out his secret. She was amazed and rather startled to find that he went back to Tangle Garden, where the Jones twins, Polly and Molly, had fallen heir to some of the old crowd and were carrying on the old traditions of sitting on the spring-house roof and singing, or dancing in the living room to the cranky victrola.

Dabney went away, and then Twig. The ranks were thinning.

Susan, unexpectedly, was the next to go. She departed, after a week of frantic purchasing and packing—"Six pairs of white bloomers, six pairs of dark blue bloomers, twelve middy blouses, three sweaters," and so forth—to a girls' camp in New Hampshire. The entire family, except Randy, went down to North Philadelphia to put her on the train. On the high sunny platform they met the group of girls and the councilor with whom she was to travel. Ted, of course, made his usual success with the girls. They clustered and fluttered about him, laughing enthusiastically over his witticisms, or looking impressed by his pronouncements about time tables, weather, and "connections." His smooth dark hair gleaming in the

sunshine, he stood at ease with one hand in the pocket of his white linen knickers and smiled down upon them from his superior height, benevolently, quizzically. Jill watched him with that blend of amusement and impatience with which the pretty girl generally beholds the complacent struttings of the contemporary male who knows he is good to look upon.

Beverley, in a clean white sailor suit, accompanied by a puppy which he had recently acquired and so had not yet had time to love quite to death, was holding court among those of the girls who were not captivated by his elder brother. Mr. and Mrs. Dale talked to the councilor, while Susan, suddenly very affectionate, stayed close beside Jill and hooked slim, cold fingers through hers. Sue, very pretty in her tan frock and little tan hat, under which her shining hair showed in two soft curves on her cheeks, looked eager and shy, and somehow inexperienced beside the other girls.

The train announcer began to stride up and down, bellowing words of what might have been Choctaw; people seized their bags and moved to the front of the platform; porters came bustling up. A moment later a flag of smoke showed far down the glistening lines of tracks, and then, before the good-byes were finished, the long train pounded in.

And so Sue was gone.

The decision to send Susan to camp had come as a

surprise to Jill when, one evening a week or more ago, her parents had told her of it. They had been sitting on the lawn at twilight, when the shadows crept out of the fragrant flower beds and the sky was a pale, clear green after sunset, and a bat, black and eerie, swooped and darted overhead.

"It's time Sue got away from you three older ones for a little while," said Mr. Dale. "You and Ted and Randy. You're all older and stronger and more vociferous than she is, and you drown her out. She's a sweet child, too, very ready to be obliging, and you all keep her trotting from morning till night. So we're sending her off to a camp in New Hampshire that the school recommends, to try life on her own for a while."

Camp! Woods, a lake, morning plunges and setting-up exercises, hikes, singing, pungent wood fires with the smoke rising blue and ghostly into the darkness, marshmallows, canoes, and the dripping of paddles; girls, girls, girls! Two years ago Jill had longed vainly for it all. That time had passed.

"It will be heavenly for Sue," she said warmly. "She'll love it."

They had imposed on Sue, all of them, from Beverley up to Ted. "Sue, I can't fix this signal for my train. You help me!" "Sue, be a lamb and get my coat!" "Sue, if you're going down on the Main Street, get me some stockings to match my new shoes. Oh,

well, never mind then—but if you *could*—thanks a lot." "Sue, tell 'Enry the Imp needs washing."

"I feel as though your summer were rather petering out, Jill," said her mother. "Randy has his work, and Ted has invitations for house parties. I'm afraid you are going to be lonely sometimes. Your father and I shan't go away, except for a week-end now and then, because of Randy and the house, and investments that have to be watched, but if you want camp, dear, or anything else that is possible, you may have it."

But Jill had scarcely begun to enjoy the new house. Why should she go away and leave it now? And Billy was coming home.

"I'd like to learn to run the Red Imp," she replied thoughtfully. If Ted were away she and Billy and Sally might want to use it.

Susan and Dabney and Twig away; Randy working all day and hurrying to Tangle Garden every evening; Ted fitting his invitations together like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle—Jill did begin to feel lonely. Sally, however, was still about, and Billy was coming.

Both Ted and Sally were there when he arrived. They had been talking about a picnic at Valley Forge, a favorite haunt of the Dales, but nobody had made any move to start, and they sat on in Bev's lawn swing, chatting lazily. Billy came swinging up the drive. He had reached home just that afternoon and

had not even stopped to rake his old "cits" out of the trunk in the attic; he wore the stiff white duck trousers and the blue-gray tunic of his uniform. Jill saw him first.

"There's Billy! Billy!" she called, standing up and waving, while the lawn swing wobbled and shook in its treacherous way.

Billy strode across the grass. "Jill! I came right over. *You* look the same, though your house is surely different! Hello, Ted! And Sally! I certainly am glad to see you!"

Billy's coming put new life into the afternoon. Everybody talked at once, and nobody listened to anyone else. Jill, Ted, and Sally, all three, pointed out the features of the new house, and babbled bits of news without pausing for breath. They took him in to see Mrs. Dale, and tried to protect him from the advances of Beverley, who considered his uniform immensely dazzling, almost as impressive as that of the policeman on the corner. In the midst of all the excitement, someone remembered the picnic, and before they were quite aware of what was happening, they were in the Red Imp and Delia was bringing out the picnic kit, explaining volubly that she could have done better if she'd had longer notice, and Mrs. Dale was telling them to be sure to drive carefully and not to stay out late, and Beverley was howling to go with them.

Valley Forge was only about twenty miles away. They loved the ride through rolling country, all hedged and wooded and planted, with the lodge gates and long, half-hidden houses of gentlemen's estates, and the sleek beauty of farms that are run on model lines at a loss, and they loved the park itself, open and windswept, high above the winding river. In the fall, the long stretches of hillside and bordering woodland were a tapestry of russet and brown, of scarlet and gold; in the spring they were lacy with dogwood and softly green; by summer time they were languid and mellow, thickly green and somehow wistful.

"Chapel first as usual?" said Ted.

He began winding among the driveways of the park, over the hills and hollows of that land, peaceful enough now in the afternoon sun, where once ill-clad bodies had shivered in the cutting wind, and bare feet had slipped and bled on the sharp snow. The cannon, black and polished and so small that they seemed almost toys now, and the tiny neat log cabins, reproductions of the old sentry huts, that were scattered over the landscape, seemed not to have the remotest connection with times of suffering and of war. Jill tried, as she always did, to imagine the cold and the desolation, the bitterness of despair, which those hungry, ragged soldiers of Washington's army must have known.

And all that time Howe's army in Philadelphia

was having a high old time," said Billy, "eating and drinking their heads off and keeping nice and warm in the red-brick houses."

"And dancing and making love to the pretty girls," put in Ted. "War didn't feaze them much."

He swung the car around in front of the Memorial Chapel. Slender and pointed, with its delicate stonework and its cloisters, it looked like some of the exquisite Gothic chapels that are found in the Old World.

"Let's go in just for a minute," said Jill.

She loved the great stained-glass windows, glowing in their rich blue and red, loved the carving of the oak choir stalls, the arms of the forty-eight states softly sculptured on the vaulted ceiling, the silk flags, still and brilliant overhead, the small bronze statue of Washington, the pointed door that opened on the cloisters, showing their fretted gray stone splashed with sunlight, bright against the dazzling green of the woods beyond.

A group of people, evidently from the Middle West, came in, and a guide began the explanation of the history of the chapel.

"Let's get out," whispered Jill, who would far rather remain in ignorance about the donor of the lectern or the meaning of the rabbit upon one of the choir seats, than have to hear things which thrilled her to her very finger tips labeled as beautiful.

They drifted out into the cloisters, where were

wind and sun and shade in cool patches. In the center against the wall, surrounded by the glossy dark leaves of mountain laurel, was the statue of a kneeling woman. The lines of her bowed back told of the grief, the patience, the endurance, which the wars of any country demand of its mothers.

"Wouldn't Washington be surprised if he could come back now and see all this?" said Sally. "I expect he thought of Valley Forge as the most desolate and hideous place in all the country."

"Be funny, wouldn't it," said Billy, "to come back and find yourself on a church window!"

"What I like about all this—chapel and park and everything," said Jill, as they got into the car again, "is that it stands for the time of suffering and cold and despair, instead of being like most national monuments a rah-rah thing about a perfectly obvious victory, with so many of the enemy dead and lots of triumph and shouting."

If all four could possibly have squeezed into the front of the Red Imp they would have done it. The back seat of a touring car seems to be made, in these days, exclusively to put hats in. The Red Imp regularly carried three in the front.

"Seems funny," said Sally, sliding back and forth over her share of the seat, "to have so much room here. It rarely happens. Do you suppose the car will balance properly?"

Jill and Billy in the back, finding the seat too formal, perched upon the folded-back canvas top, with their feet upon the leather upholstery.

"Thoroughly *jejune* thing to do!" said Ted scornfully over his shoulder, and he swooped from side to side of the road, seeking bumps and hollows to make the ride more interesting for his passengers in the rear.

"'Pack clouds away and welcome day!'" warbled Jill, clinging to the car for dear life.

"'With night we banish sorrow,'" the others took it up.

They always sang on their jaunts. It mattered not what they sang, from Shakespearean madrigals to the barber-shop ballads of the last century, they all joined in, with a fair degree of harmony.

"We miss Sue," said Sally critically, as the last "good-morrow" faded out. "She keeps us on the key. We were off then."

Ted swung the car abruptly off the road on to the grass and stopped it with a jerk. Billy caught Jill just in time to save her from pitching out on her head.

"Ted!" she protested.

"Thought we'd eat here," said Ted serenely.

"General Varnum's headquarters" said the sign before the little two-story stone house, plastered over and whitewashed, with a pent roof and a plain farm doorway.

"Not much style for a high-ranking officer!" said Billy. "But it looks weathertight, and I guess that meant a lot that winter."

They carried the picnic kit around the house to the terrace at the back, where there was a banked-up grassy level shaded by a sycamore tree. Below it, a hill sloped away to the wide plain, and far away beyond were the dim roofs and spires of Conshohocken and Norristown.

"Delia didn't do so badly," said Jill, investigating the neat packages in the leather kit. "Three kinds of sandwiches, and lemonade in the thermos, and cake, and strawberries in that box. They're from our own garden. Ever-bearing. We're going to have them all summer. Company B, fall in!"

Somewhere on the edge of the woods that climbed the slopes of Mt. Joy on the right a white-throated sparrow whistled the clear, ineffably sweet notes of his evensong. The shadows were long on the coarse grass. The little house behind them, which had looked on so many different scenes—on conferences of anxious heads of a tattered army, on exhausted soldiers struggling through the snow, on endless summer nights when weeds and grass grew in a tangle over the old terrace and no one remembered Valley Forge—gazed down on them inscrutably. Jill wondered what it thought of them, of the girls in one-piece V-necked sports frocks that were as slim and scanty as a

rudimentary undergarment of the olden days, and of Ted, sleek and cropped of hair, negligent in blazer and knickers and plaid golf stockings; of their casual, elliptical chatter. Probably Billy alone, in his 1840 uniform, seemed reasonable to the old house.

The sun slipped out of sight; the tree overhead was dark and tall, and its leaves rustled and whispered together. Far over the plain, little lights in the distant town began to twinkle through the dusk. A few stars crept out into the pale sky.

"There goes the mail plane, the Fast Continental," said Ted idly, pointing to a small bright light in the eastern sky.

"Oh," said Sally, thrilled.

"Think of it, thundering along through the night sky, rushing letters to people!" Billy took it up. "Love letters, and letters carrying all kinds of news—of fortunes and deaths and honors and——"

"Bills," went on Ted, "and advertisements, and notices of meetings of the Ladies' Aid Society. She always comes along about this time."

"What time is it?" said Jill. She knew Venus when she saw it, but she really wanted to find out the time.

"Time? I don't know."

"Why, it isn't an airplane at all," said Sally disgustedly. "It hasn't moved. It's only a star."

They all shouted.

"Guileless child you are, Sallykins," said Ted, reaching for the last piece of cake. "Anybody else want this? Sure?"

"We'll have to go soon," said Jill, making no move, however, to pack up their things.

"Oh, not quite yet," pleaded Billy. "Gosh, this is nice."

A wisp of a breeze, fresh from the woods and the river, drifted over the hill behind them. The moon, red gold and a little flat on top—"As if somebody had sat on it," said Jill—came walking up over the edge of the horizon to join the stars.

"Mars is gay in crammasy," said Jill softly, remembering a verse that McTavish had taught her:

> "Venus in a green silk gown,
> The auld moon shakes her gowden feathers,
> Their starry talk's a wheen of blethers,
> Nane for thee a thochtie sparin',
> Earth, thou bonnie broukit bairn!
> —But greet, an' in your tears ye'll droun
> The haill clanjamfrie!"

"What's broukit?" said Billy.

"Pale-faced. And *greet* means weep. I got that from McTavish. He knows lots of things like that. The other night when it rained so hard and the wind blew and howled, and then there was that horrible thunderstorm and the lights went out, I went down to the kitchen for some candles. McTavish was there, and he

said, 'Eh, sirs, it's a wild nicht for a soul to be flitting!' Isn't that a thought? It makes little shivers run down my back. I love it."

Ted had been fastening up the picnic case. "We'll have to go," he said. "Come along, the haill clanjamfrie of you."

He and Sally went ahead, while Jill and Billy slowly followed. The moonlight cast black, softly moving shadows on the whitewashed walls of the house and made the grasses silver and the dim bushes mysterious. It touched Billy's dark head and broad shoulders, made him seem taller than usual and somehow remote.

"Remember Sally Wister's Journal?" said Jill. Two years ago, before Billy went to West Point, Mrs. Dale had read the diary of the little Quaker girls in the Revolution to her crowd of boys and girls on Sunday evenings. Jill quoted:

"We sat on the steps till nine o'clock, and the moon gave a sadly pleasing light."

Billy stopped a moment. Jill looked up at him questioningly He started to say something, but changed his mind and only flicked Jill's tip-tilted nose gently with one long finger.

"Want to go for a walk to-morrow morning, Jill?" he said in the old casual way. "Up the Wissahickon or somewhere?"

"Love to, Billy."

"Well, fine. Half-past nine too early?"

Jill shook her head. "Not a bit."

They would go walking to-morrow, on some of the cool woodsy paths along the upper Wissahickon Creek, where brown water foamed around boulders, or poured softly into still pools that reflected the ferns and fir trees growing low over them, and the crumbled walls of old stone mills. Afterward they would come back to the house for a dip in the pool, and Billy would stay for lunch.

The French horn tooted imperatively.

"We're coming!" shouted Billy. "Keep your hair on!"

Go away to camp? Who wanted to go away this summer?

CHAPTER XIV

PHILANTHROPY

IT WAS one of those cold and rainy days that a Philadelphia July sometimes sandwiches in between weeks of sultry heat and days of sparkling coolness. Jill, in a rose-colored slicker with a black beret pulled over her yellow hair, had gone out to feel the rain in her face. She swung all round the six "beautifully landscaped acres" and came back past the swimming pool where the rain pitted the water and little waves slapped against the sides, and where the poplars whispered and flicked their wet leaves.

A cardinal, whistling his "purty, purty, purty" from one tree was answered by another somewhere near the garage. Jill looked for him, tipping her head back, while the heavy drops of rain splashed in her face and hung on the gold tendrils of hair that curled around the edge of her beret. In a second she saw him, perched on the weather vane over the garage, a bit of scarlet against the rain-gray sky.

Jill was thinking of days like this at Tangle Garden. The creek, which always grew swollen and muddy on

the slightest pretext, would be rushing along, pulling with it the long coarse grass that grew on its bank. The young trees, heavy with the weight of the rain and wind, would be drooping over it, the dense green of their leaves reflected in the water. Ted used to call it "the great gray-green greasy Limpopo River, all set about with fever trees." The old house would be dim and damp and a bit draughty around the corners. They would persuade Lura to let them make pinoche in the kitchen, and would carry away the tins and dig out cubes of the candy while it was still hot and creamy. Probably others would drift in—Billy, when he was home, Twig, Grace and her brother, Peg Manners, and Sally, of course—and they would all turn the house upside down by playing Sardines from the cellar to the attic. All the while the rain would bang on the roof and gurgle in the gutters and swish against the window panes, while somewhere—it never failed—there would be an ominous sound of dripping, and a wet brown stain would spread over the ceiling.

The new house, with its great walls outside, its silken curtains and soft rugs within, seemed impervious to rain and wind. There were no sneaking little drafts about the windows, no sound of lashing rain or wind. If there was no sun, there *were* electric lights, and they left no dim corners or shadowy doorways. The house, suave and imperturbable, seemed

to say, "I do not recognize weather. It is beneath my notice."

Jill, having put away her wraps in the closet under the stairs, made for the living room, where she heard her mother's voice and Ted's mingling together. In the doorway she stumbled over something hard and something soft, which proved to be Beverley impersonating a submarine.

"Didn't you see my periscope?" he demanded wrathfully, brandishing a tennis racket before him.

Jill, who had cracked her shin against it, now recognized it as her own cherished new racket and made a dive for it. "Bev," she scolded, holding it high in the air while he jumped for it, "you oughtn't to take it out of its press on a damp day like this, and you mustn't play with my things, anyhow."

"Choo," replied Beverley, abruptly transformed into the Broadway Limited. "Get out of my way or you'll be runned over. Choo. Choo. Whooooooooo!"

Mrs. Dale, who was writing checks at her desk, looked up to smile at Jill. "Good walk?" she asked.

"Ummhmm. I asked McTavish if this wasn't real Scottish weather and he said aye, he liked it fine." She sat down on the arm of Ted's chair and clicked the toes of her sports shoes together. "That's really my book you're reading, Teddy," she said, "but you can have it."

"Thanks."

"Oh, me," sighed Jill presently, after an interval in which everyone went on silently with his own occupation, "I'm bored. I crave melodram."

Mrs. Dale laid aside her pen. "We miss Sukey and Randy so dreadfully. If you want something to do, Jill, you might address some of these envelopes for me."

On Mrs. Dale's desk was a large leather portfolio with celluloid index tabs printed: Bills, Receipts, Letters, Philanthropy, Miscellaneous. It was open to-day at Philanthropy. Letters from various agencies requesting contributions littered the desk.

Jill took a pen and a magazine to write on and sat down on a stool. Nobody spoke. Mrs. Dale's pen scratched and Jill's squeaked; the leaves of Ted's book now and then rustled; Beverley's knees thudded on the rug in some mysterious occupation of his own.

"The trouble with being philanthropical by check," said Jill suddenly, licking the last envelope, "is that it's so frightfully impersonal. You don't see the people you're helping at all, and they don't see you. There's no—no spirit of service about it. You know what I mean."

"'The gift without the giver is bare!'" quoted Ted with satiric intent. He laid aside his book, and sitting up, examined critically the shine on his shoes. "No, Jill, nothing doing in the personal service line. You can't walk in and rescue a family from dire distress

and restore their self-respect with a few well-chosen words, a purse, and a pile of red flannel petticoats. Unless you do it through an agency you don't even know who's in need. You might pick out some poor people who were terribly proud of their wash practice and who'd be furious if you waltzed in overflowing with philanthropy."

"Well, I think we live too much to ourselves, anyhow," maintained Jill.

"Two thirds boredom and one third spirit of service," Ted diagnosed. "Come on, let's get out the Red Imp, and I'll buy you a chocolate sundae, and we'll mail the letters and get some new books and stop at the gift shop for the etching you raved so about. Come on, old thing, let's go out and spend some money and have a good time."

"Idiot!" said Jill, laughing and holding out her hands to be pulled to her feet. Ted was a dear. Although he never took one seriously, he was always an understanding comrade, always a sworn enemy to boredom. Under his mockery Jill recognized that there was truth. They were coming to depend upon money rather than on their ingenuity for the production of "a good time," and the pleasure of spending was already losing its keen edge. They were learning to spend mechanically, without joy. She wanted to shower money on people to whom it was a novelty and see the thrill upon their faces.

"I'll go get a hat," she said. "Be ready in half a sec."

"Change your shoes, too," commanded Ted, who had strange streaks of fastidiousness. "I hate those gunboats of sports shoes you wear."

"If you really want to do something for someone who would appreciate it," said Mrs. Dale, "you'll go and see Lura. I've had her on my mind lately. The last time I went I saw no signs at all of that precious husband of hers, and I'm so afraid he's skipped off with her money. You might take her some vegetables from the garden and just make sure she's all right."

Lura, in her married state, lived in a three-story, three-roomed house on a narrow, unpaved alley called Peaceable Street, where there were always at least three fights in progress.

"We'd never get away," demurred Jill. "She'd want to talk to us all the rest of the day. Look, I do believe it's clearing off."

The rain had stopped, and here and there through the moving piles of clouds a patch of blue showed. Jill ran upstairs to change the black and white sports shoes to which Ted so strenuously objected for a pair of high-heeled alligator pumps and to get the rose-colored summer felt hat that matched her frock.

They slipped out quietly in order not to arouse Beverley, who had settled his own problem of the dull

day by going to sleep on the floor with his head on a gray felt elephant. At the gate they met Billy. Ted brought the car to a stop with a great squeaking of brakes and skidding of tires.

"Hello," said Billy. "I was just coming to see you. Going out?"

"Just bumming. Hop in."

Jill moved over closer to Ted to let Billy slip in beside her. The long low red car with its tan top folded back, its rakish French horn on the side, with the pretty girl on the front seat between two handsome boys, swooped down the streets under the dripping maples, and people turned to look at it.

"Hasn't it been an awful day?" said Jill to Billy.

"Has it? I hadn't noticed. It rained this morning, of course. I stopped by at your old house this morning and found all the crowd there."

Jill caught her breath. Billy went on, not noticing: "It certainly did seem funny without you. They were all playing Up Jenkins on the dining-room table. Those Jones girls may be homely, but they're funny as a crutch. One of them does an esthetic dance—does it well, too—and the other one takes her off. You ought to go over some time. Sally was there this morning."

Billy rattled on, while Jill's heart went cold and heavy within her. Billy and Sally back at Tangle Garden, entertained by the clever, even though

homely, Jones girls! Jill wondered if that queer, gone feeling that she had were jealousy.

The feeling lasted, even while they stopped at a drug store for sodas and at a gift shop for the etching of a wild goose flying over a marsh that Jill had seen and coveted.

They came out of the shop with their purchase, laughing and talking. Jill remembered in a flash how amazing and enviable it had once seemed to her that people could go into a shop and buy something that took their fancy, and come cheerfully out again untroubled by the fact that they had spent five or ten dollars. She could see the Jill of yesterday envying the Jill of to-day! And yet to-day, ungratefully, she was not quite happy because fun went on without her at the old house which she had chosen to leave!

She turned to say something to Billy and, turning, caught her heel on the step. She staggered, felt herself held firmly by Billy on one side and Ted on the other, and stamped her foot to make sure that it was not hurt.

"Bother!" she exclaimed. "I've wrenched the heel completely off my shoe!"

"Quite sure you didn't sprain your ankle?" said Billy anxiously. He leaned over to pick up the little heel that looked so forlorn and silly by itself. "Funny things, girl's shoes!" he said, smiling and balancing it upon his palm.

"Never mind, we'll take it over to Rawson's and have it mended right away," said Ted.

"They'd take forever to do it. How about that funny little Russian Jew cobbler down on Kendrick Street that we used to take our shoes to?"

Kendrick Street was in the foreign and colored district that extended in a narrow line through two or three miles of suburbs. The car bumped over the uneven cobblestones on the narrow street, and children scattered before it in all directions. A dingy shop window filled with dilapidated old shoes proclaimed the whereabouts of what Mr. B. Goldstein, in tarnished gilt letters on his door, chose to designate as an "Electric Repair Shop."

Ted took Jill's pump and the heel and disappeared into the shop. He was gone a long time, and Jill and Billy amused themselves by talking to the children who gathered around the car. One, a round-faced, red-cheeked little girl with dancing black eyes, who looked Spanish, interested them especially. Jill noted approvingly that the child's gingham frock was immaculate—and then saw that a soiled dress was frugally worn beneath it for underclothes.

"You're a nice little girl, aren't you?" she remarked at last, with an unintentionally condescending air caused by embarrassment at the unblinking stare with which the child regarded her.

"Yes," said the little girl complacently. "Everybody loves me because I'm so pretty."

"By George," said Billy with a shout of laughter, while the child, not a bit abashed, danced away, "no inferiority complex there!"

Ted burst out of the shop with the shoe, still unmended, in his hand, and a look of concern upon his face.

"This is the real thing," he told them in a low voice. "These people are having a hard time. I can't understand the mother—she speaks Yiddish or something—but the oldest kid told me that their father has run away. Just got discouraged and skedaddled. There are seven children—oldest one is ten—and a tiny baby, and they haven't anything to eat. It seems rather desperate."

"Oh, Ted, we must do something! Here, give me my shoe!" Jill climbed out of the car, and, limping on her uneven footgear, went with Ted and Billy into the shop.

There were shoes, covered with dust, on the untidy counter, the cobbler's machine stood unused in the corner, and scattered about the room were the members of the unfortunate family—pale, grimy, ragged children with anxious expressions in their light blue eyes, and a bedraggled mother whose face was white and puffy with tears and who carried in her arms a

wee baby wrapped like a mummy in what seemed to be an old apron. The baby was wailing, and the other children looked listless. It was Jill's first experience of actual destitution, and the sight hurt her. She was angry, too: how *could* the man go away without a word and leave this crowd of little ones to get along as best they could?

"Find out how long he's been away, Ted," she whispered.

"Since long," answered Ada, the thin, eldest little girl. "A week maybe. So long. We eat up all the food and we haf no more left and no money, and we are so hongry. My fadder he don't come back, and we haf no money for rent nor nothin'."

She shifted to her other arm the year-old child she carried. Her dull air of responsibility and care was like that of a little old woman whose life had been hard.

"How much money have you two got with you? I have three dollars and some change."

Among them they had nearly fifteen dollars.

"We'll leave you this," said Jill to the mother, speaking very slowly and gently in order to make her understand. "This will tide you over for the present, and we'll come again. We'll take care of you till your husband comes back."

The woman may not have understood the words, but she saw the money and she recognized the kindly tone. Tears of gratitude streamed down her cheeks,

and before Jill knew what was happening, Mrs. Goldstein had flung herself on her knees and was covering her benefactor's hand with kisses. Painfully embarrassed, and conscious of the amusement the boys were concealing, Jill attempted to soothe the poor soul and to extricate her hand at the same time.

"We will come back, you understand?" she repeated. "We will come back."

Her own eyes were filled with tears.

"The poor thing," she breathed to Billy as they crossed the pavement to the car. "Isn't it perfectly ghastly to think what some people have to go through? We must give them some clothes, and things, Ted, and let's do it all ourselves as long as we can. Randy can help—he's rolling in wealth, with his allowance and his salary besides."

"Why don't you tell some of the agencies about them—the S. O. C. or the Jewish Welfare?" said Billy sensibly. "They have trained workers to take care of cases like this."

"Yes, trained workers who'll write them up on catalogue cards and index them," said Jill scornfully. "We'll take a personal interest in them."

It would be fun, Jill thought, climbing into the car again, her heel still in her hand, to set a family on its feet and to watch it grow healthier and happier. Perhaps there might even be musical genius in some one of the seven offspring of the irresponsible Mr. B.

Goldstein. So many of these foreigners were talented.

Ted had already started the engine when two five-year-olds, twins, ran out of the shop and hopped up on the running board. They would have been pretty children, with their light curly hair, blue eyes, and fair skins, if only their charms had not been overlaid with a thick layer of dirt.

"Me mudder," exclaimed one, "she wants to know what iss your name." To Ted—"You are so good she will name our baby after you."

Ted in his turn was intensely embarrassed by Mrs. Goldstein's overflowing Slavic gratitude, although Jill—and evidently Billy, too—suspected that he was secretly pleased at the idea of a namesake. Before he had time to frame the right kind of protest, however, Billy answered gravely for him:

"It's Theodore Allen Dale, and he always uses all of it."

Jill laughed. "Billy, you wretch. We must go now," she told the twins, who still stood on the running board and stared. "You had better run in to your mother. We'll come again."

"Will you bring us something?" said the more sober of the two in her deep little voice. "It is right for you to give us things. You are rich. You have beautiful clothes and a big car. You ought to give us things."

Jill laughed, a little dashed.

CHAPTER XV

AND RANDY LAUGHED

JILL plunged with zest into the rescue of the Goldsteins. Wholehearted as Jill's enthusiasms were, this one seemed even more absorbing than most. She loved to give, especially when the giving brought a visible measure of well-being and joy into lives that had been totally lacking in them. And the Goldsteins, it appeared, loved to accept.

Ted's interest perished with the second demand on his allowance; and when the time came for a house party in Cape May, he packed two English pigskin suitcases to the bulging point with a large assortment of white flannels, blazers, silk shirts, knickers, and vivid golf stockings, and boarded the afternoon bridge train followed by a perspiring darkey porter staggering under the suitcases and a golf bag, without a single backward thought for the fate of the Goldsteins.

So Jill carried on alone.

As the hot summer days slipped past, like sleepy turtles flopping one by one off a sunny log into sunny water, Jill's protégés came to offer her something more than a chance to work out her ideas of philan-

thropy; they were a refuge. Jill, for all the protecting luxury of beautiful house, pretty clothes, expensive cars, was feeling a trifle lonely and sore at heart. Her old "crowd" continued to flock to Tangle Garden, and the life there went on as hilariously with the Joneses as hosts as ever it had in the days of the Dales. True, they would all come to the Chestnut Hill house whenever they were especially invited—there had been a very successful afternoon tennis party and some moonlight swimming parties in the tiled pool—but they never dropped in at odd moments through the day or evening. It was too far to come, and the driveway too long and formal. Habit was strong; they cut across lots, or slipped up the back lane, or hopped off the trolley car, to drop in at the old house where for years they had been coming and going as they pleased and where they felt at home. Randy, who went back every evening regularly, often urged Jill to go with him, but as a rule she refused, her feelings hurt by the indifference of the boys and girls, who seemed to find just anyone (Jill rather underestimated the Jones twins) a satisfactory substitute for the seven Dales.

Worst of all, although Billy seemed seldom to go to Tangle Garden, he came equally seldom to Graylock.

"Inertia, pure and simple," wrote Ted from Cape May, where he was disporting himself among college men and next year's débutantes in a manner thor-

oughly satisfactory to all, "too much trouble to them to change. Let them go. Soon as we dig ourselves into C. H. we'll have a new crowd of our own there. So keep your hair on."

Jill did not want to let them go; and she did not want them to be willing to let her go. And so she tried to sink her hurt feelings in her concern over the woes of her Russian Jewish protégés; and because it is fun to buy new clothes for children, and somehow sweet—though embarrassing—to read the ardent Slavic gratitude in tear-wet eyes, she succeeded.

"Look, Sally," she said one day, holding up a small pink and white sacque which she had bought for Theodore Allen Dale Goldstein, "isn't this cunning?"

Sally, to whom no one would ever be a satisfactory substitute for her beloved Jill, had, of course, developed a sympathetic interest in the Goldsteins. "Though it's purely a moral support," she said engagingly. "Positively I've reached the point of bustitude where I have to put buttons on the collection plate on Sundays."

"You know," Jill added thoughtfully, "I've been rather worried about Ted lately. He drives the car so recklessly, and he doesn't seem to care about anything but parties and golf and all that. But I wonder if having someone named after him won't be good for him—it might have sort of a developing effect on him."

As the days wore on, Jill began to feel, in spite of her very real interest in the Goldsteins, that it was about time for the Goldstein père to come home and take over some of his responsibilities. Susan came to the end of her first month in camp; Ted, having brought one house party triumphantly to a close, moved on to grace another; Randy each week boasted of the increasing size of his bank account; and still the Goldstein palm was out. Mr. and Mrs. Dale, and even Billy, when she saw him, urged that she hand the case over to some organized charity, but Jill doggedly struggled on with it alone.

A day did at last come, however, when Jill and Sally, drawing up before the little shop in the Red Imp (which Jill was now cautiously driving), learned from all the Goldstein children in chorus the welcome news that "me fadder" had returned to his family. The children, almost too healthily vociferous now, seized their packages from their hands and preceded them, whooping, into the house.

Jill looked eagerly for Mr. B. Goldstein, but he was nowhere to be seen. She had expected that he would come forth covered with shame and gratitude and that she would gently impress upon him the fact that it was his duty to his family and to society to stay home and make a living. A back door opened as Mrs. Goldstein and Ada came out, and through it the head of the house was visible, a tall blond man with a

drooping moustache, high cheekbones, and a stupid look in his bulgy eyes. He was carrying the baby and looking down at the little toddler who clung to the leg of his trousers. It was evident, as the door closed, that he would not appear that afternoon.

"I'm glad he's willing to mind the babies, anyhow," whispered Sally. "That looks as if he were really rather a nice man."

Ada as usual delivered her mother's messages. They were all so grateful; "me fadder" had come back; he was too much overcome to face the heaven-sent benefactors, but he was going to stay at home in the future and work steadily. At this point Jill tried to insert the speech of graceful retirement which the occasion seemed to call for, but she was stopped by excited gesticulations and a quickened rush of words from Ada. They were still in great trouble—a new trouble. The payment on the shoe machine had fallen overdue, and the men would come and take it away. How could "me fadder" work steadily if his most important tool was taken away? He would become discouraged and run off again, and what would his family do?

"How much will clear your machine?" asked Jill.

More tears and protestations of undying gratitude. By much prodding she elicited the fact that fifty dollars would settle their woes.

Fifty dollars! Jill looked at Sally.

"That's a whole lot," whispered Sally.

Ada hastened to explain that while fifty dollars would clear it, the men would be satisfied for a time with thirty.

Fifty dollars. But, then, Jill thought, that would be all. If she cleared the machine completely, and set the man on his feet, then surely he could make his way without further support from her. She had spent all her allowance, but she had a savings account that had been built up bit by bit from birthday and Christmas moneys. Strangely enough, since the Fortune, nothing had been added to it. It had always been a sacred hoard, somehow inviolable; even when she had wanted so desperately to go to West Point and there had not been money enough, she had never thought of touching the savings account.

Before she left, she promised to bring the money next morning.

That evening she told Billy about it. They were sitting at the end of a row of boys and girls on the roof of the spring house at Tangle Garden—Billy had suddenly asked her to go with him—and while the others sang in the old way, Jill and Billy talked. Overhead the moon was round and golden and almost near enough to touch; it gleamed in the swimming hole, and made the shadows of the still trees black as ink. Locusts zoomed monotonously, and once, from the woods across the field, a whippoorwill whistled

plaintively. Claude Jones, a cousin of the twins', sat at Jill's feet, twanging a banjo and telling her now and then half banteringly, half sentimentally, how lovely her hair—or her eyes—or her nose—looked in the moonlight.

"Good grief, Jill," protested Billy, "don't hand out fifty dollars so easily. You've given them too much in money and other things already. Go slow, now."

"But, Billy, it all depends on that man's having his machine now. It's the crisis of their lives. If he can go on working and make a living now, he'll be all right. If he loses his machine, he'll be more discouraged than ever and everything will go to pieces. Don't you see?"

"Well, don't give him so much. Those fellows will take a smaller payment, and then he could earn the rest himself. It would be much better for him."

"If he starts in with a clean slate——"

"If you make it too easy for him he'll lose all his independence."

"Oh, Billy, it isn't a question of independence, it's a question of the price of the machine."

"I think you're wrong," said Billy bluntly. "I've said so all along. I think you ought to turn them over to some of the regular agencies and let them investigate it a bit. How do you know that they're telling the truth? Anyhow," he went on, abandoning that aspect as Jill drew a long breath preparatory to burst-

ing out in defense of her beloved Goldsteins, "it's all wrong in principle. That's how wealthy people with more heart than head do so much harm. They spill money all over the shop until the poor beggars they're helping think it's to be got just by asking for it, and why bother to work any more. It isn't a good thing to let people get money too easily—they want to keep on doing it!"

"There's ginger ale in the ice box," sang out Polly Jones, in the very words that Jill herself had so often used. "Come on, you two!"

"Let me help you down, fair princess," said Claude Jones idiotically, and Jill, more indignant with Billy. than she would ever have believed possible, disregarded the latter's steadying hand and accepted the assistance of the gallant Claude.

The fact that Billy, his six-foot length clothed in white that gleamed in the moonlight, his dark hair tossed, his keen, intelligent face puckered with distress at the way she had taken his words, looked even more engagingly handsome than usual, only increased her wrath. To be classed among the wealthy people with more heart than head—that stung!

Claude stayed at her side as they made their way across the uneven grass to the familiar back steps.

"Bill, will you open the ginger-ale bottles?" called Molly Jones over the heads of the crowd, and Jill felt a little pang when she saw how straight Billy

went to the drawer in the cupboard where the can opener was kept. Wherefore she turned deliberately and smiled on Claude Jones, forgetting that Billy had learned the whereabouts of that very same can opener in her service long before the Joneses had appeared on the horizon.

She thought that Billy would come around the next morning to apologize. When afternoon came and still no sign from Billy, she was feeling restless and depressed. She telephoned Sally.

"Do you want to come take the Goldstein twins out for a ride?" she suggested, sticking with a certain gallantry to her philanthropical undertaking. "I'd like to show them some real country."

It was one of Sally's perennial charms that she was always ready for anything. And she, too, found the five-year-old Russian Jewish twins intensely amusing.

Although they lived in the suburbs, the little tykes had seen amazingly little besides their own untidy, treeless street, whose cobblestones blazed in the dusty sunlight. On Sundays, it was the custom for all the children of Kendrick Street to don whatever tawdry finery they could muster and go forth in troops to "walk" through that portion of Germantown where the houses had lawns and hedges and trees. Their ultimate objective was the "reservoir," where they would swarm over the stone wall and climb steps and stream over the landscape generally, a gang of

moist and noisy hoodlums, with the toddlers, weary and tear stained, following with philosophical doggedness in the rear. Jill had seen them sometimes when she went out with her family in the car on Sunday afternoons. It seemed to her inexpressibly dreary, both for the poor children themselves and for all who had to look at them.

This afternoon Jill and Sally took the two little Goldsteins out into the real country beyond Chestnut Hill. Jill, who had not been driving very long, kept her mind firmly upon the road before her, and so it was Sally who did most of the chirping of: "See the moo-cow, children, over there! No, *there!* Oh, we've passed it now. Keep your eyes open, maybe we'll find another. Look, there's a horsie, and a baby horsie with it! Look, there, quick!"

Suddenly the motor, with an apologetic cough, died.

Jill, with that utterly panicky and helpless feeling which besets the inexperienced driver when his complicated machine succumbs to what might be any of a thousand mysterious maladies, stepped on the starter, pulled the choke, advanced and retarded the spark at random, and finally got out, raised the hood and gazed upon the silent engine beneath it as if in some strange way her mere glance might prove efficacious.

"Maybe there ain't no gas," suggested one of the twins.

"It was a quarter full when we started," said Jill.

Sally thumped the indicator on the dashboard gently with her fist, and the little arrow fell back to zero. "It was jammed," she said.

They found a stick and tested the tank. It was totally empty.

Two cars sailed past without even a backward glance for the ladies in distress.

"We passed a filling station not so awfully far back," said Jill slowly. "I can walk back and get them to bring us some gas in a can. Isn't this disgusting!"

"We'll both go," said Sally stanchly. "It isn't so far."

After discussion, however, it was decided that, as the day was warm and the hill was steep and the children's legs were short, it would save time for Jill to go on, stopping at a house to 'phone if she could, while Sally stayed with the children in the car.

They had come flying down the hill in no time at all; going up, on foot, was a different matter altogether. The sun was hot; the road was hard; the bouncing Bet along the roadside was heavy with dust and the drone of bees. The first house where Jill tried to 'phone was closed up; the second had no telephone. After that there were no more. Each turn in the road, Jill thought, would show the sky at the top and the bright scarlet of a gasoline pump, but

each turn brought instead another steep bit and another curve. It seemed endless. Sally would be wondering what had happened to her. Jill pressed on, though her heart was beating uncomfortably and her face seemed to glow like a pulsing little stove.

A dusty car with the license of another state slowed up in passing her and stopped. As she came abreast of it, a man leaned out of the front seat and said:

"Can I give you a lift?"

He was obviously a gentleman; his accent had something of the flavor of her mother's. Jill got in thankfully.

"My car's out of gas at the foot of the hill," she explained. "If you'll just drop me off at the gas station. It can't be very far now."

The filling station could provide a can of gasoline and a funnel, but they had no means of conveying it to the Red Imp. Jill had a moment's agonized vision of herself tugging a five-gallon can of gasoline down all those miles of hill in the heat!

"My dear child, you can't manage that!" said her new friend. "I'll take you down, of course. It won't take a moment."

So in she got again, and while they waited for the gas to be measured out into the can and for the boy to find the funnel which he mentioned so glibly, Jill and her rescuer talked. And because the man was kindly and sympathetic and the sort of person Jill

was accustomed to, and because Jill was fond of chatting, she had soon told him a considerable portion of her life history. He listened as if he enjoyed it.

"What baffles me is your accent," he said when she paused. "You don't talk like the folks about here."

"Well, Dad was from New York State and Mother from the South," admitted Jill, "so I suppose my accent is a sort of hybrid. Mother was from Randolphton, Virginia."

The boy brought the gasoline and stowed it in the back of the car, and Jill paid him with a bill from the new leather wallet which contained, behind a little glass window, the driver's license of which she was so proud. The man started his engine.

"I used to live in Randolphton myself when I was a boy," he said. "My name's Strudwick—you might ask your mother if she remembers me."

"Oh, but of course she remembers you," exclaimed Jill. "You must have lived in the next place to hers. I've often heard her talk about going possum hunting with the Strudwick boys! Mother was one of the Randolph girls—Margaret Randolph! Why, how perfectly amazing, my meeting you this way! Are you just going through?—Can't you stop over and see Mother and Dad?"

Jill was charmed with the coincidence. She knew how delighted her mother always was to see any of the old friends who now and then drifted across her

path again. To her intense surprise Mr. Strudwick turned to her and said sternly:

"Just what were you doing getting into the car of just any strange man who came along the road?" And then, with the utter lack of logic which Jill had occasionally before noticed and deplored in the male, he proceeded to deliver a long and severe lecture upon her crime in accepting a ride from a stranger. That he had looked "human" and turned out to be an old family friend—the defense that Jill, stunned by surprise, at length found voice enough to offer—was, he said, no excuse at all. By the time they reached the bottom of the hill, Jill, completely crushed by the weight of her proven folly, had promised fervently never to do such a thing again. She climbed out of the car thankfully and was received almost with tears of relief by Sally, who explained volubly that she had imagined everything from Jill's untimely death under the wheels of a truck to her being kidnaped by bandits.

"It's not her fault that she wasn't kidnaped," said Mr. Strudwick, evidently not even yet convinced that he had spoken sufficiently forcibly.

Then the gentleman, as unexpectedly as he had grown stern, suddenly turned sunny again, was introduced to Sally and the twins, made himself entirely charming, and promised to follow them back to Chestnut Hill and see the elder Dales.

The two cars rolled up the driveway, after having made a trip down to Kendrick Street, where they dumped the twins with unceremonious haste upon their doorstep, just when Rosie was bringing afternoon tea out on to the lawn. Mrs. Dale was there, and Mr. Dale, and Billy, and they were all sitting under the striped umbrellas near the circular garden, looking as fresh and cool, Jill said, as something on the stage.

Mr. Strudwick was most cordially welcomed, and he managed, Jill noticed with relief, to make her meeting with him sound as natural and conventional as could be. Rosie brought more iced tea and more of the star-shaped cookies, and the little party settled down to enjoy itself, with the talk going happily and spontaneously, now and then concerned with reminiscences of the older people, now and then veering around to include the three younger ones.

"I'm sorry, Jill," said Billy in a low voice, once when the conversation had swung back to the marriages and careers of the five Lukenses of Randolphton, Virginia. "I'm sorry if I tied it up last night. I didn't mean to criticize you. I think you've been wonderfully generous to those people and all that. I just wanted to tell you to hold off a little for a while, and I guess I put it too clumsily. But you know I didn't mean to hurt you, Jill."

Before she could answer, Randy joined the group. He shook hands politely with Mr. Strudwick, said

"Hello" to his mother and father, bowed to Sally, kicked Billy's feet fraternally, and then stood looking down at Jill with that air of sublime self-satisfaction and private joy which a boy assumes when he is the possessor of a very special piece of news which he intends to keep to himself long enough thoroughly to pique his sister. Still without divulging anything, he sat down in a striped rose and gray deck chair with his long legs stretched out in front of him and his hands in his pockets and grinned, steadily, disconcertingly, at Jill.

"Oh, for goodness sakes," she said at last, laughing in spite of herself, "you look like the Cheshire cat in Alice when there wasn't anything left of it but the grin. Come on and tell us!"

Actually she said the words lightly and cheerfully. She felt at peace with everyone. The restless feeling was gone. The lawn, wide and sloping, the garden with its tall lilies, its blue delphiniums and creamy snapdragons, the poplars, gray green and quivering, the low bulk of the big stone house, the sunshine, the long shadows, the care-free congenial chat of people who were charming, all made her well pleased with herself and her background.

Randy, running his fingers through his red hair, sat up. There was that in his eyes and in the quiver of his voice as he spoke which suggested intense, suppressed emotion.

"Well, it's really too good to keep," he began slowly, rising to his feet. (It is impossible to be eloquent when one is prostrate in a highly colored deck chair.) "Listen to this, Mother and Dad—and everybody. I went down to Jill's friend, B. Goldstein, after work to take my shoe to be fixed—didn't dare go anywhere else—and there was the place all torn up and the kids howling and the police patrol in front of the door."

He paused. Everyone waited expectantly. Jill felt her heart thumping; she had no idea what Randy was going to say, but she was uneasy. From the light in his eyes, she suspected that somehow the Goldsteins, the police patrol, and Randy were preparing a bad moment for her.

"Mr. B. Goldstein and family," Randy turned to explain to Mr. Strudwick, "are Jill's mission in life. She thought we were growing selfish and self-centered after we got our money, so she found a poor family—father discouraged and run away, no money, no food, rent due, of course—and she took 'em under her wing. They were no end grateful, cried and kissed her hand and named the baby after Ted—which Jill said would have such a developing effect on Ted—" Randy choked, recovered himself, and went on—"and took her advice about washing their faces, and asked for more money."

Jill flushed hotly. Randy's description of her philan-

thropy made her sound so silly and priggish. She opened her mouth to speak.

"*Well*," said Randy hastily, "I got there just in time to see Mr. B. Goldstein, and Mrs. B. Goldstein—in Jill's old green dress and a flossy hat with feathers on it—get into the patrol. Then some plain-clothes men packed a still in after them and they all went off."

"A *still?*" repeated Mrs. Dale.

"Yes'm, a still." Randy rocked back and forward on his heels. He was transported with joy. This was his moment. "It was a raid!" he crowed. "Mr. B. Goldstein has been there all the time after the first week or so! He used all the money his family got out of Jill to set up a still! For the last two weeks they've been selling moonshine in their cellar for fifteen cents a glass! This morning they bought the hat with the feathers on it and made a fifty-dollar payment on a radio!"

There was blank, startled silence. Jill felt as if she had stepped off a precipice backward. The tears, the pathetic tales of need, the protestations of gratitude, she had believed them all. She had patted herself on the back, figuratively speaking, for the good she was doing. And now——Randy went relentlessly on:

"And every time Jill would go there, prancing up the steps with her heart all full of zeal and good works and another five dollars for the poor in her

fist—" Randy, just enough like Jill, with his slim figure, his gray-green eyes and fair skin, to make his mimicry irresistibly ludicrous, minced daintily across the lawn smiling beatifically upon imaginary Goldsteins—"and all the time, Papa Goldstein would be down in the cellar tending his still and peeking out of the window to see how much the nice, kind lady brought."

Jill, aghast, outraged, ridiculed—humiliated beyond words—looked to her parents for comfort. Mr. Dale was frankly laughing. Mrs. Dale made a heroic effort to keep her lips steady, but she could not prevent tears of helpless mirth from streaming down her cheeks. Mr. Strudwick had risen and walked away, his hands clasped behind his back, his fingers twitching. Over Billy's face spread a slow, reluctant grin.

Randy, carried away with himself, gave the screw a final turn. "I asked one of the kids," he said in a trembling voice, "what the name of the youngest Goldstein—the baby—was, and he said—here goes the noble influence on Ted—he said it was *Ikey!*"

CHAPTER XVI

CLAUDE AND BILLY

THE joke was not allowed to die in its lusty youth. Randy rang all the changes on it.

"That's pure spring water," he said to Mr. Strudwick at dinner when Rosie filled his glass, "but if you want anything stronger probably Jill will be glad to get it for you. She's in the bootlegging business."

And later, when the subject of radio came up—

"I don't know how the Goldsteins will pay the next instalment on their radio, now that Papa Goldstein has been taken to the hoosegow. Jill, you'd better see about that. It would be dreadful if Theodore Allen Dale Goldstein were to miss his bedtime story—it's so developing to the character."

Or, thoughtfully, as if seeking information—

"Didn't there use to be a kind of drink called a *cobbler ?* Seems appropriate, somehow. . . ."

His tone was one of bright seriousness which was hard to combat. Jill writhed impotently. There was nothing for her to say.

Mr. Dale, who had been unusually silent all evening, suddenly said severely, "That will do, Randy."

Both Randy and Jill looked at him in surprise. Jill wondered uneasily if anything were the matter. This was not his usual style in dealing with Randy's moments of effervescence. The only thing that could deflate the young gentleman when he was in this state was a remark barbed with wit that would prick his little bubble. After the public rebuke Randy cheerfully retreated to a chair behind the others, and whenever he thought no one was looking he would catch Jill's eye and make elaborate gestures in the air of pouring out a drink and quaffing it off.

When a ring came at the telephone, and Mr. Dale was called, Randy whispered hoarsely to Jill, "It's really for you. It's the police. They want you as an accomplice in the Goldstein affair—the power behind the still."

Jill rose. She had had all she could stand.

"I've reached Braddocks," she declared in a voice of exasperation. She said good-night politely to everyone, observed crushingly to Randy, who began to hum, "Oft in the stilly night," as she passed him. "You aren't nearly so funny as you think you are," and fled ignominiously.

And yet, as she sat in her pajamas on the window seat in her room and looked out over the black garden, it was not Randy's crude teasing that made her spirit smart and curl up within her and caused her cheeks to flame and burn in the darkness, but the memory of

that slow, reluctant grin spreading over Billy's face. Billy, who had told her not to give the Goldsteins that extra fifty dollars, who had been so hideously right all the way through, Billy, daring to laugh at her humiliation!

"Jill, dear, are you awake?" The door opened softly and her mother slipped in, tall and slim and cool against the light from the hallway.

"Yes. Over here—on the window seat. There's a nice little breeze coming in."

Mrs. Dale sat down beside her. "Isn't the garden quiet and dark! Do you remember how the frogs used to carry on at the old house on hot summer nights? There was one old bullfrog especially. Do you remember?"

"Yes, Napoleon." Billy had named him.

"Honey child, don't take this thing about the Goldsteins too seriously. It's rather absurd, and mortifying for you, of course, and quite appalling to think that the sacrifices one makes from the very highest motives could ever be the means of starting an ignorant foreign family on a career of lawbreaking"—Mrs. Dale's voice trembled suspiciously—"but I don't believe any permanent harm is done. The man will probably be let off with a fine, as it's his first offense, and then we'll see to it that he and his wife both have plenty of steady self-respecting work to do right away. So don't worry about it, sweetheart."

Jill hastily cast a belated glance of compunction in the direction of the Goldsteins and the probable weakening of their moral fiber by her lavish and ill-advised giving, but the thought of that graceless family of opportunists was like a brisk application of salt to the open wound in her pride. The tears, the protestations of gratitude, the fervent admiration, and worst of all the glow of self-approval which these demonstrations aroused in Jill, were galling to remember. And the silver spoon marked T. A. D. G. in old English letters which she had given to the baby Ikey in Ted's name! The future regeneration of the Goldsteins held no appeal for Jill just now.

"Hand them over to the S. O. C.," she said wearily. "I never want to hear of them again."

"Ted will be home to-morrow," said her mother. "That's nice to think of."

Jill, in all the excitement, had almost forgotten that joyful fact. It would be a relief to have him home again; he, too, had been involved in the unfortunate philanthropical venture.

She went down to breakfast late the next morning, after everyone else had eaten and vanished. Her place was set all by itself in the middle of the long table. Having stepped on the electric bell under her mother's chair to summon Rosie, she wandered to the window to look out.

It was going to be a hot day. The sky was a pale

metallic blue, and the sun shimmered over the lawn. In the shrubbery, which had that heavy, lush, overgrown look that comes with August, a locust set up his shrill buzz, which grew higher and more intense until it seemed as if one's nerves would crack. After the unpleasant racket had died away, a yellow-billed cuckoo among the motionless leaves of the big maple by the curve of the driveway, uttered his mournful throaty gurgle. Rain crows, old Lura used to call them, and she used to croon a monotonous darkey song that began:

"Ah t'ink ah hear de rain-crow say,
'Ain' gwine rain no mo'."

Rose came in with Jill's orange juice, a slender glassful in a bed of cracked ice. Jill thought ungratefully that it looked like an advertisement—the long suave dining room, the glass of golden orange juice, all iced, Rosie's broad smile. She sat down and unfolded her napkin, finding within it a letter from Sue with a note in her mother's handwriting penciled on the envelope.

ANGEL CHILD:

Dad wants me to help him to-day, so I shan't be home to lunch. Will you meet Ted's train at three-forty? Tell Delia what kind of ice cream you want to-night—we'll celebrate.

Love,
MOTHER.

Sue wrote of lakes and canoes and hikes, of a night spent on the top of a mountain, and of the sunrise making rainbows through the chilly mists that rose and billowed in the valley below. It all sounded remote and cool, untouched by the fevered scramble of human life.

Rosie brought in hot rolls and a plate of eggs and crimped brown bacon. She was smiling, and through the door which she left open behind her came the sound of laughter from the kitchen, Delia's hearty shrieks, and McTavish's dry chuckle. Rosie moved about the dining room, straightening shades, filling Jill's glass of water, looking for little attentions, when Bev came in, wearing his abbreviated khaki play suit, and made straight for Jill.

"Ikey Goldstein wants a radio!" he said rapidly. "Now give me some of your marmalade."

"What do you know about Ikey Goldstein?" demanded Jill. "Did Randy tell you to say that?"

"Yes, but I forgot part of it. Can I have some of your marmalade?"

"Yes, but put as much inside of you as you can. Don't spread it all over your face!" Beverley looked aggrieved at this unprovoked attack, and Jill, smiling again, provided him with a large marmalade sandwich. He went outdoors to eat it, where he could share it with his puppy, who had a taste for such things, and Jill was left alone. The quietness of the long

formal room oppressed her; in the mirror above the antique silver on the sideboard she could see herself a solitary buttercup, with her golden hair and the frock of yellow dotted swiss that almost matched it, against the white wainscoting behind her. Eggs and bacon had no appeal for her. Deciding to follow Beverley outdoors, she took her glass of milk and a roll and made for the long French windows that opened on the garden.

"Miss Jill," said Rosie, "you're wanted on the telephone—Mr. Billy."

Billy! Jill hesitated a moment, then stiffened. A certain slow, reluctant grin was still fresh in her mind. She could have forgiven his having been right, but the laugh—that took time.

"Tell him I'm at breakfast and can't talk to him now," she said, and slipped outside, her breakfast in her hands.

After the cool breathlessness of the house, the air in the garden was like a blast from a furnace. The zinnias, robust, fiery, hairy-stemmed savages that they were, stood up sturdily under it, but everything else that was green seemed to droop. It was too hot even for Beverley and the Sealyham pup named Nippy to romp; they sat dejectedly together on the big roots of the maple tree. Jill decided that two swims were none too many on a day like this, one now and one this afternoon when Ted got back. She

thought that perhaps she had been a little hasty in refusing to talk to Billy; now he would probably go swimming at Tangle Garden.

And so, when next the telephone rang, she answered it herself.

"Is Miss Jill Dale there?" said a masculine voice. But it wasn't Billy's.

It developed that Claude Jones, he of the curly black hair and the mandolin and the soothing ways, had been much impressed with Jill when he met her the other night at his cousins' house, and that, in consequence, he wished to come and see her this afternoon.

"I've got to go down to North Philadelphia to meet my brother," said Jill, "but I'd love it if you'd go with me—and then probably we'll go swimming afterward. Is that all right with you?"

Nothing would charm Mr. Jones more.

Jill, frankly flattered, hung the receiver up and went dashing up the stairs, two at a time, to see what offered in the way of clothes. Mina had cleaned her white pumps, pressed out her white silk sports frock, the coolest garment she possessed, and shortened her new slip to match it. It was easy to be neat when things were done for one. Jill remembered the days of hasty safety pins and wrinkled skirts.

She considered calling Sally up and mentioning to her, just casually, of course, the conquest of Claude.

In a moment, though, her sense of humor, which seemed to have got lost in the scuffle of the last day, reasserted itself and she laughed at the idea. Besides, Sally would probably ask about the Goldsteins, and that was a subject Jill still preferred to avoid.

That afternoon, however, as she and Claude sped along in the Red Imp on their way to meet Ted, she found herself involuntarily bringing it up. Claude had heard nothing about it, and so Jill told him the whole story. She told it in detail and, having a keen sense of dramatic values, she told it well; by the time she finished, Claude had thrown back his head and was laughing delightedly. He was laughing not at her but with her, as was perfectly evident from the admiration in his bright black eyes. And Jill found that in the telling of it she had gained a new detachment: she could look on the whole galling experience as an amusing episode that might have happened to anyone. The soreness which she had felt vanished, and she went off into gales of laughter herself.

"I don't believe there's another girl in Philly," said Claude earnestly, "who'd take that sort of thing the way you have. There isn't anyone else with your kind of sense of humor."

After that, even the scar disappeared.

Ted, when he got off the train, warm and cindery and wilted, was glad to see Jill—"Do you feel as cool as you look?" he added darkly, as if such a feat were

first impossible and second illegal—but he greeted Claude without marked enthusiasm. A black and perspiring porter carried his suitcases and golf bag to the car, and Ted, after giving the darkey a tip that made even the blasé red-cap betray signs of pleasure, climbed into the back seat.

"No, thanks," he said, declining a place in the front. "I'm not fit to sit near anything white. My word, what weather! Beat it for the pool, Jill. Look out, that fellow in front is going to make a left turn."

Jill, who had been driving with complete success as long as her teacher was not in the car, promptly stalled the engine.

"What's the news?" said Ted, to cover up the pause, while a policeman motioned impatiently to come ahead, and Jill with a flushed but almost frigid calm stepped on the starter and shifted gears.

"Why, I'll tell you," said Claude chattily, half turning round and putting one immaculate arm over the back of the seat, "these sort of protégés of yours have been, well, pinched for bootlegging."

"What?" said Ted.

As soon as they got home they went in swimming. Claude did not dive, but he encouraged the others to, and admired their efforts ardently. They did not stay in long, for it was warm even there. The sun glared through the poplars in shimmering, glistening shafts.

Jill, as they went up to the house again, found her thoughts straying toward Billy. She wondered if he had tried to get her while she was out.

"Did anybody 'phone me?" she slipped into the pantry to ask Rosie.

"No, miss."

"Mr. Billy didn't 'phone?" asked Jill, just to make sure.

"No, miss. I always tell you, Miss Jill, if anybody asks for you."

She invited Claude to stay for dinner.

It had been planned as a meal of celebration for Ted's return, with fried chicken, and peas from the garden, hearts of lettuce with their favorite Russian dressing, and the peach ice cream that Jill had decided on, but somehow as a festivity it fell flat. Mr. Dale was absent-minded, and he came out of his silences only to speak severely to one or the other of the boys for some opinion that did not suit or some piece of slang that ordinarily he would have enjoyed. Mrs. Dale looked troubled. Claude and Jill talked brightly, and Randy contributed incidents from his day. Ted, after being snubbed twice for casual mention of expensive clubs, steam yachts, speed boats, polo ponies, and other appurtenances of the life he had been leading for the last two weeks or so, subsided completely.

After dinner, Claude persuaded Jill to go out into

the garden to look at the moon. They sat in Bev's lawn swing and watched the little silver sliver of new moon go sailing higher into the sky. The stars were bright and warm and almost near enough to touch. Claude told Jill she was "sort of" different from other girls, and Jill was interested and subtly thrilled to know just how she was different. It was a new kind of fun, this interplay of words, half bantering, half serious; their voices were low, and there was always a little bit of laughter in Jill's, and always a little bit of tenderness in Claude's.

"Come on, you two!" called Ted. "There's some ice cream left. Come get it."

The freezer, still packed with ice and salt, stood by the kitchen door. They—Jill, Claude, Randy, Ted—ranged themselves on the back steps and ate up the last delicious spoonfuls of the cold sweet stuff. The night was beginning to cool off now, and the heavy black leaves on the trees stirred to a tiny breeze.

"Cut it out, Ikey!" protested Randy, as Ted dropped a piece of ice down his neck.

"Little boys mustn't be impertinent," retorted Ted, fishing in the freezer for a larger piece of ice.

"Oh, isn't it Ikey?" said Randy with a great show of innocence. "I do get so mixed up. I know you and the Goldstein kid are named after each other, but I never can remember which is which!"

"You're getting just a little bit above yourself, my

young friend!" said Ted with an undertone of dangerous seriousness in his voice.

"Let's sing!" said Jill hastily. "'Oh, Ella Rie, so kind and true,'" she began.

"'In the little churchyard lies!'" announced Randy and Ted cheerfully.

It was an old song, a pathetic song, which they had found once in the attic at Tangle Garden and joyfully adopted.

"'Her grave was bright with drops of dew,'" they sang on, and Jill was conscious of Claude sitting there at her feet with the light from the kitchen on the shiny even waves of his black hair, and of the admiration in his upturned face. "'But brighter were her eyes.'" She did hope, though, that Billy would telephone again to-morrow.

No word came, however, until dinner time, when all the family were just sitting down at the table.

"Somebody to speak to you on the 'phone, Miss Jill," said Rosie.

Jill rose slowly and put aside the napkin she had half unfolded.

"I expect that's Claude," simpered Randy.

"The kind-of-a, sort-of-a person," said Ted. "Why doesn't he ever come out and say something definitely? Probably he'd kind of like a sort of date with you. Tell him you guess maybe you might probably be able to."

Jill paused at the door to defend her new friend. "He has perfectly exquisite manners," she said pointedly, "which is more than can be said for some of the gentlemen here present. That doesn't mean you, Dad."

"He has right pretty curly hair," said Mrs. Dale mildly.

Jill carried the words to the telephone with her. They rang in her ears as she picked up the receiver, so loudly that she could scarcely hear Claude's voice at the other end of the wire.

"I'd sort of like to see you to-night, Jill. How about it?"

Right pretty curly hair. Jill saw it—just about on a level with her eyes when they stood side by side—shiny black curls in little regular waves all over his head.

"I'm sorry, Claude," she said breathlessly, "I'm busy to-night."

Billy was tall, his dark hair swept back straight from his fine forehead, his eyes were brown and direct and steady; he talked about things that were real—interesting and amusing things, not little tender compliments that he only half meant.

She settled down to double solitaire with Ted in the living room after dinner, while Mr. Dale read and Mrs. Dale sewed. Randy paused on his way out.

"Is this what you call being *busy?*" he said, and

added from the door just as if it were a matter of no moment, "If you're sticking around hoping Bill will come by, you'll have a good long wait. He's gone away to camp."

"Camp? What camp?"

"Twig busted his ankle, and he sent for Bill to come and take his place for a couple of weeks or so. He went off on an hour's notice yesterday. Said he tried to get you, but you were *busy* then, too."

He went off whistling.

Jill pushed her cards aside. Billy at camp for two weeks or so! Why, in three weeks he would have to go back to West Point!

CHAPTER XVII

"AN' IF THE SKY SHOULD FALL. . ."

IT STARTED, as such things do, out of nothing. It came like one of those unsatisfactory summer storms, which after a time of threatening skies and distant low rumbling, produce a drenching downpour of rain, a jagged flash or two of lightning, and a peal of thunder, and die away without clearing the air.

Jill had been away for a week. Sally's aunt, who had a tiny cottage at one of the half-forgotten summer places on the New Jersey coast, invited both girls to visit her. In that little group of shabby cottages scattered at random among sand dunes and long grass before a broken-down boardwalk and an army of tall, seaweedy piles, they completely forgot that they were Seniors, with hair long enough to roll into small knobs at the back of their necks, and they behaved like irresponsible ten-year-olds. They tied their hair back with blue ribbons, spent long hours on the beach in their bathing suits—in and out of the buffeting salt water at will—built sand forts against the incoming tide, scrambled over the dunes for sea pinks,

picked baskets of hard, red beach plums and made delicious marmalade out of them, toasted marshmallows at night over the amber and violet and green of driftwood fires, and slept under mosquito netting with the salt wind in their faces and the breakers' endless roar in their ears.

Sally stayed on, but Jill came home at the end of a week, tanned and hungry, and most enthusiastic about the idea of buying a shack at Long Cape and going down there for haphazard, primitive week-ends.

"I thought you liked civilized life," said her father quizzically, "—scented bath salts, tiled swimming pools, flame-colored silk curtains, and the like."

"I do," said Jill, laughing. "I like them both—both extremes, I mean. In contrast to each other, like salt after sweet. It's the mixture of the two I can't bear."

"She likes what she hasn't got," said Randy pointedly.

This was the first indication that Jill had of a certain sulphurousness in the atmosphere. It grew as the next few days marched on, threatened more than once to take fire, subsided again, smouldering.

Randy, Jill perceived, was getting a bit cocky. He was aware of himself as the only one who had been sufficiently unmoved by the Fortune to stick to his original plan of working during the summer, the only one who had not wanted to rush into an expensive new house, the only one not involved in the Goldstein

fiasco. He made no effort to hide his complacency, and he kept up the Goldstein jokes long after they were done to death and might have been allowed to be decently interred.

On the other hand, Ted, the eldest and the leader, was feeling a trifle let down. While Randy's summer activities received loud approbation from his elders, Ted's were passed over in tactful silence. He had no objection to hearing Randy praised, or to being himself considered the grasshopper in an ant hill that contained one large and earnest ant, but he did object, he growled privately to Jill, to having the ant sit up and wave its flippers at him and say, "Now you admire me."

"He's a darn good kid," said Ted, "but he's got to stop being so pleased about himself—and he's got to stop giving me advice about how to run my own affairs!"

With the things in this state, it was not surprising that there should be an explosion. It came, as explosions do, just when everything seemed safely calm.

The three of them, Randy, Ted, and Jill, were in the kitchen about ten o'clock one night, foraging for something to eat.

"If Dad asks either of you what I want for my birthday," said Ted, knocking out squares of ice from the freezing tray of the electric refrigerator, "tell him I want a raccoon coat. It's a good time to get them now.

The London Shop advertises one for six-eighty-five——"

"You're not going to ask for a coonskin coat?" demanded Randy disgustedly.

"Sure. Why not?"

"Well, for one reason, only collegiate idiots wear them, and for another Dad's been spending a lot of money lately and I don't think you ought——"

"You nitwit, I'm trying to save him money! If he buys it now he can get it for two or three hundred less than it'll cost in November!"

"Of course a raccoon coat *is* one of the necessities of life," said Randy sarcastically. "But it seems to me you could let up for a minute. Dad's worried about something——"

"How do you know he's worried? He hasn't said so, has he?"

"No, but he's been as cross as a bear with a sore head. You can't open your mouth without getting jumped on. You must have seen that."

"Randy, I don't think you ought to talk like that about Dad," interrupted Jill. She cut the last of the cake into three slices. "Here, have some food and stop fussing about fur coats on the hottest night in the year."

"What's wrong with what I said about Dad? It isn't like him to be so cross—that's how I know he's worried. It's better to recognize it and do what you

can to help him, isn't it, than to shut your eyes and pretend everything is sweet as silk and go on spilling money by the bushel? Isn't it?" Nobody answered. "Isn't it, Ikey?" repeated Randy with a grin.

Ted was an easy-going soul, pleased with the small events of life, sufficiently well satisfied with his own social graces and the successes that attended him, but he had under his carelessly good-natured manner a temper that could flare up at a touch. He had heard the word "Ikey" once too often.

"You talk entirely too much, Randy," he said hotly, "and you're getting entirely too darn set up about your own priceless virtues. Take your cake and your ginger ale and get out of here."

"It isn't your kitchen, is it?" said Randy levelly, with a glint in his gray-green eyes.

Ted's anger was like the blaze of a handful of excelsior; Randy's, probably because of the hard stratum of obstinacy at the base of his philosophical, happy-go-lucky nature, was steel, slow to heat, slower to cool. Jill, aware of the rising feeling, put out her hand impotently.

"It isn't your kitchen, is it?" repeated Randy.

Jill smothered a chuckle as she looked at them. Except for their grown-up appearance, they might have been two truculent small boys glaring at each other: Ted tall and threatening, Randy red-headed and tense, a muscle twitching in his cheek, repeating

savagely the purely rhetorical question, which seemed to have taken on some obscure meaning for him, "It isn't your kitchen, is it?"

Suddenly Ted took three long strides toward him, caught him by the shoulder, spun him around, picked him up bodily—Ted, for all his ability to dance gracefully, was a football man, and Randy, though he had lengthened out amazingly in the last few months, was slight—and dumped him down on the grass outside the door.

Ted, completely restored to good humor by his feat, came back straightening his coat, which Randy's struggles had twisted almost off, and dusting the knee of his white flannel trousers. Behind him came Randy, a strange fierce Randy, with wildly ruffled red hair and blazing eyes.

"You could do it then because I wasn't expecting it," he said with clenched fists. "Just try it again. Just come on and try it."

"Silly idiot, I'm not going to fight you."

"Randy, don't be a goose," said Jill. "Ted was only fooling."

"Look out, Jill. Just come on and try it, Ted."

"Boys, boys, what *are* you doing?" Mrs. Dale came into the kitchen.

"It's just a silly little-boy quarrel, Mother," explained Jill. "Of the two, I think Randy's a little bit the sillier."

"Well, I'm not going to have my two grown sons glaring at each other like angry dogs," said Mrs. Dale.

"Mostly my fault, I guess, Mother," said Ted stiffly. "Sorry, Randy." He held out his hand, but Randy, without another word, turned and marched upstairs.

Randy's door was closed tight that night, and he allowed no one, not even his mother, to come in and talk to him. In the morning the little contretemps was tacitly assumed by everyone not to have happened. Everything went on just as usual: Randy went to work; Ted and Jill played tennis and had a swim; things were just as usual—until Randy came home. Then the rift made itself felt, spreading like something unseen. Dinner was a stiff and uncomfortable meal; the boys were cold and distantly polite to each other. Conversation languished. Afterward everyone went his way in different directions.

"What are we going to do about it?" said Jill miserably to her mother.

"Just let them alone," counseled Mrs. Dale. "They'll come to their senses after a while. Randy resents the indignity that Ted put upon him, and Ted resents Randy's resentment, but they're too fond of each other to let this sort of thing go on very long. I'll talk to Randy as soon as he has had time to cool down."

"Well, it makes a deadly atmosphere in the house," said Jill.

Even Dabney noticed it. She came up to the city to have an aching tooth attended to, and Ted brought her out for a swim and afternoon tea. When Randy came home in the midst of the party, constraint settled down. Ted became silent, and Jill talked very hard, and Mrs. Dale looked sad. Dabney showed her surprise in her expressive little pointed face, but she did not say anything about it till later, when Jill had taken her upstairs to get her hat.

"What's happened to make everything so gloomy?" She leaned over the dressing table to pull her tight little hat into place with slim, practiced fingers, and she spoke in the looking glass to the mirrored Jill behind her. "It used to be such fun to come to your house because you were all having a good time and enjoying each other, and if you squabbled nobody minded. But now you're just like anybody else," she finished in frank disappointment. She gathered up her handkerchief and beaded bag. "I must dash. Don't mind what I said—it was rude of me. Only I think of you as something extra special."

Jill, after saying good-bye to Dabney on the front steps, came slowly up the stairs again. Everything *was* different. Gloom, ill temper, and sulks. What fun was there in living in a family like this? She hastened her steps, gaining energy as she went. She determined

by her very will power to straighten things out, to force her family to be light-hearted and good-natured and congenial again, to be frank without fear of explosions, and tolerant of other people's enthusiasm. Deciding to begin with Randy, she went to his closed door and rapped smartly on it.

"Come in if you're good-looking!" sang out Randy in the old way.

Randy's room was a big square one, with windows on two sides. It had been furnished, according to his demands, in thoroughly masculine fashion, with a small mahogany bed, a severely plain chest of drawers on the top of which only a pair of silver-mounted military hair brushes was allowed to show, a morris chair (this turned the decorator pale with horror, but Randy wanted it, and so it was brought, faded and worn red-plush cushions and all, from the old house), a square mahogany desk, and some Navajo rugs and a collection of maps—old ones of the Schuylkill region, cheap new railroad maps of South America, a great red, blue, and green one of London, put out by the Underground, which showed not only subway stations but the famous old houses and palaces and inns as well. Under one of the windows was a large work table, which the maids had orders never to touch, and which was littered always with the coils, wires, screws, bulbs, and batteries of the electrical operations which Randy conducted in his odd mo-

ments. Here also was the cage of Ivan Ratatsky, a pedigreed white rat with an evil red eye, the last of his line, having eaten up his pa and ma and nine baby brothers and sisters at no further inconvenience to himself than a chewed-off tail.

Randy was working away now on a toy steam shovel, whistling between his teeth or chirping to Ivan, while Beverley, over his shoulder or between his knees or under his elbow, was breathing in earnest absorption upon the work.

"Put your finger on this while I tie it, will you?" he said in recognition of Jill's presence. "You have to wind the thing up as it is, but I believe I can hitch it up to an electric battery and make it go. Get your face out of the way, Bev." He moved one elbow gently and pushed Beverley's round head (on the crown of which three hairs always stood jauntily erect) out of range of his tools. "There, that'll do, Jill. Take it out."

Jill cleared a space for herself on the corner of the table, the one farthest from Ivan, and perched there.

"Bev," she said, catching the small brother by his shoulders and pulling him away from Randy, "Randy can't mend your steam shovel for you if you hang over him that way. Here, why don't you sit down on the floor—'way over there—and sort out these screws? Put the big ones in the box and the little ones in the lid. Couldn't you do that for Randy?"—as the little boy demurred.

There was a moment of silence while Randy grunted and whistled under his breath over the toy and Jill sat watching him, wondering what was the most tactful way to begin.

"Anything gnawing you?" said Randy at last, tossing the hair out of his eyes.

"Yes." Jill plunged in. "The fight between you and Ted is gnawing me. You haven't any idea how abominable it makes everything when you and Ted go about looking glum and not speaking to each other. I don't see why you won't make up, Ran. Ted is willing to."

Randy's jaw set in a firm line. "Oh, Ted's perfect, of course," he said. "He sidesteps everything and goes merrily on. It isn't his fault that we're all stuck in this mausoleum of a house, puffing and panting like a catfish on a bank of forget-me-nots. It isn't his fault that you came a cropper with the Goldstein business. He just started you on it and got out—and now he thinks it's funny. It isn't his fault that he's getting to be more conceited every day. That's all right! Let him go ahead and be a collegiate tea hound. I don't mind that. But he needn't try to pull *me* around. He can just keep his hands off me."

"Oh, Randy, he wasn't trying to pull you around—not seriously, anyhow. And you tried to interfere with him first. Come on, Randy, don't be a crab. Just act at dinner as if nothing had happened."

"I don't think I'll come to dinner," said Randy with dignity.

Jill jumped down from her perch. "*Oh,*" she said impatiently. "You're just being silly and sulky. What do you want, anyhow, Ran? Do you want Ted to apologize, or what?"

"I don't want anything," said Randy. "Except for you to take your peace-making complex out of this room! There's no fight going on, anyhow. I think Ted's turning into a tea hound, and he thinks I'm a prig and tries to pull me around. That's all. We don't feel too cordial to each other, but there isn't any fight."

Jill left, shrugging her shoulders. How is one to deal with a boy when he's in a mood like that!

In the hall she met her mother.

"Jill, you haven't been stirring up Randy, have you?" said Mrs. Dale. "Oh, Jill! I wish you hadn't. I thought that perhaps if he got absorbed in his tinkering and no one interrupted him he might forget all about this unhappiness."

Dinner that night was another dismal meal. Mr. Dale was twice called to the telephone—was Randy right, Jill wondered, and had anything been worrying their father?—and the rest of the time he was taciturn and preoccupied. The two older boys sat in dignified silence, which they broke once in a while to say something to Mrs. Dale and Jill.

After dinner, intensely depressed, Jill got into the car to take a little ride to "cool off." Mr. Dale drove and Mrs. Dale sat on the front seat with him, while Beverley and Jill together sat in the back.

They went down into the park. The river in the moonlight was black and slow; it moved along silkily, reflecting the little moving lights of cars on the opposite bank, the shadowy archways of bridges, the fringy dimness of an island. All along the drives were lines of cars, restlessly spinning on in search of coolness and relaxation. On the bridge they found a breeze, and a view of the city in the distance, of City Hall tower, topped with its tall, slim statue, of a white, many-windowed building jutting high into the blue-black sky in the glare of searchlights, of dark, irregular ranks of tall buildings, and little bright lights winking out of the darkness. Over the hills and fields of the West Park were scattered the untidy boxes and papers of careless picnickers; out of the shadows came now and then the sudden talk and laughter of people resting on the grass. A park trolley, brightly lighted, filled with people singing, showed through the trees as it swayed and dipped along over a trestle. There were life and movement and some light-heartedness here.

Wissahickon Drive on the way home was black and damp and cool, between the creek on the left and the high, ferny, rocky bluffs on the right. Jill

grew drowsy as they spun along with the tires singing and the chilly mist from the woods rushing into their faces.

When they were back in Chestnut Hill she woke up. The still streets, overhung with the thick low branches of the Norway maples, the big houses, set far back from the road and screened by heavy, motionless shrubbery, overgrown and luxuriant in the August humidity, looked deserted.

"Nice ride, Dad, thank you," said Jill mechanically as she slipped out of the car in the driveway at home.

Mr. Dale joined Ted, who was reading in the living room; Mrs. Dale took sleepy Beverley up to bed. Jill, too restless to sit still and read, made her way out into the circular garden and sat down on the cool stone step that led from the dining room.

The lantern which hung over the door swung gently to and fro with the faint breeze, casting its wavering light on the low, pungent box bushes, the prim little paths, the dim spikes of flowers in the beds. Up above, the moon, bright and serene, was somehow a little hard.

Jill remembered, as if it had been in some previous existence—how long this summer had been!—the night when she and Billy and Ted and Sally had had their picnic at Valley Forge. She had thought then what a wonderful summer it was going to be. Some-

thing had happened—misunderstandings, mistakes, loneliness. Life had suddenly become complicated. In the old days, before the Fortune, Jill had lived according to a simple code: to do her appointed tasks (the dusting, the dish-washing, the bed-making—how she had hated them!), to tell the truth, to be pleasant to the people about her. Life had been a brisk scramble which managed somehow to be, on the whole, happy. Now, with the tasks accomplished by servants, the time thus saved, instead of being so much opportunity gained for more truth-telling and more being pleasant to her neighbors, seemed to be a great gap in which boredom and restlessness and other foreign elements were generated.

The crickets, katydids, and locusts through the garden chirped and buzzed away incessantly. Jill thought again of that night in June. She wished she could go back to it and start afresh.

Something stirred beyond the flower beds, footsteps brushing the softness of the lawn. Jill heard a voice murmuring in the Scots tongue:

> "The auld moon shakes her gowden feathers,
> Their starry talk's a wheen o' blethers,
> Nane for thee a thochtie sparin',
> Earth, thou bonnie broukit bairn"—

and McTavish, hands clasped behind him, head thrown back, came walking through the garden quoting poetry to himself, for all the world like a landed

gentleman enjoying an evening stroll through his domain.

> "But greet, and in your tears you'll droun
> The haill clanjamfrie."

Jill said the last lines with him. "McTavish," she added curiously, "how did you happen to become a gardener?"

"Aweel," replied McTavish, betraying no surprise or embarrassment at the sudden voice from the shadows. "I wasna the lad o' pairts in my family, and so I didna have the Education. My brother had the mind—I'm no' sayin' that it was ony better ni quality than my ain mind, but it was a bit more polished, like, and had a kin' o' a knack o' graspin, Latin quantities and holdin' them tight—and so he was sent to the university to study for the meenistry. I had the gift wi' flowers and growin' things, an' so I put it to use."

"Do you like being a gardener?" queried Jill absently, her mind straying to other things.

"Ou, ay. I get mair pleasure oot o' the flowers I grow than the man who owns them, an' I have my bit cottage where I can live by mysel' withoot ony woman haverin' over me, and read Burrrns and smoke till midnight if I like. It's no' a life that wad appeal to my brother, but even if there's no' onybody sayin' 'Yes, sir' an' 'No, sir', and dustin' a seat for

me when I come to call, still and all I have mair o' the essence o' independence than he has wi' his congregation watchin' him like a hawk. Whiles I think, what if I should get rheumatism when I'm auld, or what if I should lose my poseetion, and what if my next employer should be an overbearin' mon that I couldna thole, but then I remind mysel' o' what my mother used to say when we'd talk o' this calamity and that one. 'Ay,' she'd say, 'an' if the sky should fall and crush ae laverock.' That will be lark in the English," he added.

"I think you're a good deal of a philosopher," said Jill.

"An' from the sound o' your voice, I'm thinkin', lassie," said the Scotsman gently, "that you're a wee bit in need of philosophy yoursel'."

"Jill! Jill dear, I want you." Her mother was calling her. As she rose she felt the light from the lantern full on her face.

"Ye'll no' have been cryin', have ye?" said McTavish anxiously.

CHAPTER XVIII

"IS TED IN YET?"

JILL was arranging orange zinnias in a gray bowl, trying to lose, in her absorption in the problem of persuading the vivid, uncompromising things to droop artistically, the little nagging sense of uneasiness that had been growing upon her during the last three or four days, ever since, in fact, her father and mother, trim and spruce in new clothes, with a little engaging air of renewed youth, had stowed away some expensive luggage in the back of the coupé and swirled off around the curve of the driveway.

Before the last good-byes, Mrs. Dale had hesitated, half inclined to give up the trip, as mothers will. "I don't know if we ought to go," she said, clinging to Jill, who patted her shoulder with one hand and tucked in with the other a straying lock of wavy dark hair under the close blue hat, "but your father does need the change. Jill dear, take care of the boys, and be sure to wire me if anything—the least little thing—goes wrong. The house ought to run itself by this time, but you'd better keep a steadying eye over the maids,

and, Jill, don't let Beverley stay in the pool more than half an hour at a time, and——"

"Margaret, come—they'll manage without us like a summer breeze."

Ted stooped to pick up a sheer white handkerchief faintly crumpled and reminiscent of lilies of the valley, Mr. Dale slid under the wheel and pulled on his driving gloves, Mrs. Dale drew in the edge of her blue skirt so that Randy could slam the door tight, and kissed all the children once more through the open window. Beverley opened his mouth and howled, as his custom was, at being left behind, and the pretty little car moved off. Through the window at the back Jill could see her mother's expression as she turned and said something to Mr. Dale; something in that look of responsibilities shed, something of pleasure and expectation, reminded Jill that these two, married for twenty-one years, had not in all that time taken a trip together without one or more of the children.

"Aren't they sweet?" she said to Ted, hooking her arm through his.

"I'll bet they'll be posting back before their ten days are up," returned Ted. "They'll be certain we've set the house on fire or got pneumonia or something, and they'll come dashing home to see about it."

Their plan was to drive up to New Hampshire, slowly, along the Connecticut Valley, and around

Lakes Sunapee and Winnepesaukee, to spend the week-end near Susan's camp and to come home in leisurely fashion along the North Shore of Massachusetts.

The responsibility which Mrs. Dale, with misgivings, had dropped, Jill took lightly upon her own slim shoulders. For the first day everything had gone well. Jill had rather enjoyed being the mistress of a large and handsome house that ran on oiled and noiseless wheels almost of its own momentum. True, she had found it a trifle quiet and lonely. Her father and mother, of course, left a gap that nothing—and certainly not the postcards that came fluttering back in every mail—could fill. Sally was still in Long Cape; Ted and Randy, distantly polite to each other, found the strain of that chilly relationship too great in a ménage of such reduced numbers, and disappeared immediately after meals in different directions; Beverley, missing his mother, and dreadfully bored in the long, warm companionless days, required endless suggestion and story-telling to be kept happy.

So matters stood on the third day (postal of Bear Mountain Bridge in the morning mail) when Delia, the fat and solid cook, "developed," as Ted cynically said, an ailing sister and departed at once to watch by her bedside. Jill was all sympathy at first and remained sympathetic until the yellow taxi containing Delia and luggage ('Enry was away on his va-

cation, and the big car in the shop for overhauling; and although the Dales in their old estate had been wont to ride to the railroad station in trolley cars, the Dales' servants in the new estate must needs be wafted about in taxis) had disappeared from view, and Rosie, somewhat sourly, asked who was to do the cooking. The three maids who were left, Jill thought, could manage among them. The rather stony faces which met this casual suggestion gave Jill her first twinge of irritation with Delia.

"We'll have easy things," said Jill to Rosie. "Salads and so on."

She ordered chops for dinner, and herself shelled the lima beans that McTavish brought up from the garden. It seemed as though three maids could manage the cooking for four people for just a few days.

Jill scraped up the bits of stems and wet leaves, and mopped away the spilled water on the drain board in the pantry. The flowers were done. There was no reason to linger here in this long narrow room that smelled coolly of linoleum, where the big white sink with its high-arched spigot and its white enameled drain boards, the cupboards full of piles of plates—cream-colored ones strewn with small gay flowers in blue and rose and corn color—and rows of cups of the same pleasant pattern hanging from invisible hooks by their slender handles, the long window, whose white curtains blew out into the sunshine,

all spoke of money and of the service that money brings.

There was this morning, however, an unaccustomed silence that made Jill uneasy. No dim electric sound of the vacuum cleaner on the rugs, no discreet talk in the kitchen, no firm step in the hall upstairs told her that the routine work of the day was going forward according to schedule. Jill wondered what she should do if these silent, unfriendly servants, of whom she was secretly a little in awe, should decide not to clean the bathtubs or dust the living room. Outdoors in the garden McTavish, high enthroned upon a motor which cut the grass, scooped up the pieces, and rolled the turf, rode chuggingly in wide green lanes across the lawn. Beverley, rather solemn and elated, perched beside him and asked unanswerable questions from time to time in a high-pitched voice that floated across the garden and through the pantry window.

Jill rested her elbows on the sill and looked out. The breeze was warm in her face, and it carried with it the smell of the fresh-cut grass and of the thick green leaves of overgrown shrubbery. In her ears rang the monotonous whirl and grind of the lawn mower, the exasperating shrill rasps of the locusts. A butterfly, patterned in black upon his yellow wings, hovered over the driveway.

It would be poppy time in Tangle Garden now. Jill remembered how the bright petals fell with the

stirring of the breeze and scattered over the trodden brown path or drifted in gay piles against the dim boards that confined the flower beds, and how, when they were little, she and Sally and Susan had gathered them up and carried them over to the beech tree to play merchant with them. The spreading branches of the old tree by the spring house came down almost to touch the ground and made a tent where little girls could play in the cool greenness among its roots. The soft petals of the poppies, yellow and white and pink and deepest rose, were silks from far-off China, and they were young Marco Polos bringing back their exotic goods to astonish the Venetians.

A thump behind her made her turn. Rosie, hatted and gloved and rouged, had set down upon the floor an imitation leather suitcase. Behind her, also dressed for the street, stood Agnes, one hand on her hip, and Mina, nervously drawing her upper lip down over her projecting teeth. All three wore upon their hard, common, pretty faces an expression of indignation that was bewildering to the young deputy housekeeper who faced them. What under the sun!

Rosie, it appeared, had been engaged to wait upon the table and answer the door and keep the downstairs in order, and goodness knew that was an unwarranted amount of work to expect of anyone in a house of this size belonging to people of their means

who it was perfectly evident hadn't been accustomed to having servants but ought to know enough to understand how much a body can humanly do, and to expect her to cook besides—— Agnes was an upstairs maid; she'd been an upstairs maid ever since she started to work, which was nine years ago, because she'd started in right from the cradle, as you might say, and never in all that time—— Mina was the laundress for this huge big family, and she also kept their clothes in order, which wasn't any easy job, especially when Miss Jill was so careless with her things, dropping them on chairs so that they got deep creases, and shortening slips with safety pins so that they left holes, and—— Furthermore, all three of them were accustomed to working in families that went away in the summer to some interesting seashore or mountain place, and all of them, it seemed, had known establishments where a car was provided exclusively for the use of the servants. The long and the short of it was that they were not satisfied with the Dales as employers and were, therefore, leaving at once.

Jill, rattled, indignant, too proud to beg them to stay, too inexperienced to bring them around to staying of their own accord by a judicious mixture of firmness and indifference, helplessly watched them go.

Then, somewhat shamefacedly, she ran upstairs

to put on a hanger the frock which she had taken off last night and hung by one shoulder on a hook on the closet door. None of the beds had been made, she found, and so for a time she scurried around, pulling sheets smooth and tucking in the corners, plumping pillows, and putting away pajamas and bathrobes. She even, shuddering, brought water to Ivan Ratatsky.

This done, it was time to start lunch. She ran downstairs singing cheerfully as she went, "Oh, nobody knows de trouble ah've seen." Having helped to cook so many meals in the shabby, inconvenient kitchen of the old house where the sink was too low, the stove was cranky, the refrigerator leaked, the cupboard drawers stuck, and the rag rugs on the floor caught one's heels, she found herself taking an almost professional pleasure in the laboratory-like shining equipment of the kitchen in the new house. It was a big room with buff-tinted walls, white woodwork, and a floor covered with blue and buff linoleum; a mammoth white enameled cabinet with places for supplies and tools, a glass-doored cupboard for the kitchen china, an electric refrigerator like a great humming iceberg made it a paradise for cooks.

While Jill was busily breaking eggs for Spanish omelet into a bowl, Beverley, grubby and liberally grass-stained, came stumping in.

"Go wash your hands, Bevvy," Jill told him, "and then come back and help set the table. The maids are all gone, and we're going to get along by ourselves till Mother and Dad come back."

"That'll be fun," assented Beverley amiably, sprawling over the table to peer into the bowl. "Jill, will you make some brownies, Jill?—Will you, Jill?"

She would get dinner for Ted and Beverley, she decided, before she and Randy went to take supper with the Joneses. Ted had been invited, too, but he had declined, saying privately to Jill, "I'm not going out anywhere with Randy till he gets over his grouch. No fun in it." Ted was somewhere on the Main Line now, spending the day with a college friend, but he had promised to be back in plenty of time to hand over the Red Imp to Jill and Randy for their evening's jaunt. It was just as well, Jill thought now, that Ted had decided not to go, for with the maids gone, there would have been nobody to stay with Beverley. McTavish could have come in, of course, but he liked his pipe and his book in his cottage. It was better as it was.

When Jill and Beverley were finishing their lunch, the telephone rang. Through force of habit Jill waited for Rosie to answer it, and then, remembering, put down her napkin and jumped up.

"Hello," said a familiar voice at the other end of the wire. "Hello—is that you, Jill? I thought I recognized your voice."

Billy! Jill had thought he would go straight from camp to West Point at the end of furlough.

"I thought at first I would," he explained, "but it's a long time till Christmas, and I wanted to see Father—and you," he threw the latter in as if it were of no importance, and Jill chuckled happily, "and so I came back for a couple of days. Just got in. Jill, are you going to be doing anything to-night?"

"Randy and I were going over to Tangle Garden for supper," began Jill doubtfully.

"Well, then, I'll drop in there this evening and come home with you—if you leave early. How's everything?"

"Oh, all higgledy-piggledy," said Jill, laughing with relief at being able to talk to Billy again. "Mother and Dad are away, and all the maids have left, and Randy and Ted are scarcely speaking to each other."

"Whew! That's a new one for your family. When did the maids go?"

"This morning. They just walked out with all their best clothes on, and I stood by with my mouth open and didn't have sense enough even to try to stop them!"

"I'll come round and help you to-morrow. I can

make first-rate flapjacks. How've you been, Jill? You sound pretty chipper, considering the calamities."

"Oh, I'm fine. It takes a lot to squelch me," said Jill lightly. "How did you like camp?"

"Fine. I'll tell you all about everything when I see you. It's great to hear your voice."

"Nice to hear yours. Well, I'll see you to-night."

"Sure thing. Well——"

"Well, good-bye."

"Good-bye."

Inane things, telephone conversations, thought Jill, hanging up the receiver. Smiling to herself, she went back to finish her dessert.

Ted had not yet come in when Randy came home from work and turned on the water in the bathtub.

"You told him our date was for six-thirty?" he called.

"Yes, and he promised to be home by five," replied Jill, feeling a little worried. "He may have had a puncture, of course."

She gave Beverley his evening bread and milk in the kitchen and put a huge plate of tuna-fish salad in the refrigerator for Ted. Rolls went into the oven to heat, and a piece of chocolate cake stood upon the dresser. McTavish, after hearing of the departure of "they good-for-nothing serrrvant girrrls," had insisted upon doing his own cooking and had taken to his cottage large supplies of oatmeal and tea. ("They've

been cookin' this up for some time," he said disgustedly. "They think they can get places at Atlantic City. They didna dare go while your mother was here.")

"Ted ought to be here any moment now," Jill told herself, and went upstairs to dress.

She was uneasy, though, and kept interrupting her dressing to go to the bathroom window and look out. From there she could see between the trees just a little bit of the street and the entrance to the driveway. Now and then a horn tooted or there was a flash of wheels along the road, but the horn was never a French horn, and the wheels never turned in. Jill thought of all the harmless things that might have happened to delay him: a puncture, or running out of gas, or trouble with the spark plugs or starter.

She was doing her hair when Randy tapped at the door. He was all ready to go.

"Do you suppose this is Ted's idea of a joke?" he demanded wrathfully. "It's quarter past six now."

"Oh, Randy, don't be silly. Ted's not doing this on purpose. I'm afraid something's happened—that he's been in an accident or something."

"He's a crazy enough driver *to* be in an accident," muttered Randy. "I don't think that's it, though, Jill. He's probably having a good time. They've met some girls and gone for a picnic or something, and he's just forgot us."

"He promised," maintained Jill stubbornly. "Listen!" It *was* the sound of a motor! "There's a car!"

They rushed to the window, but it was just the paper truck delivering the *Evening Bulletin.*

"What time is it now?" said Jill.

"Six-twenty. We ought to start right now. Hurry and finish dressing, Jill, so that we can go right off in case he comes in the next two or three minutes."

Jill jabbed the last hairpin into her hair and dived into a pale pink crêpe-de-chine frock which fell into place without fastenings. She clasped the rose quartz beads around her neck, caught up a frilly handkerchief and a little silver-beaded purse with amusing rose-colored figures on it, and ran downstairs to the portico, where Randy was pacing up and down impatiently.

"It's half-past now," he said accusingly. "The only thing to do is to telephone them that we'll be late and then beat it for the trolley. Hang it all, I don't see why he couldn't have got here on time."

"Randy, we can't go till he comes. There's nobody to leave Bev with, for one thing——"

"McTavish can come sit in the kitchen."

"Well, anyhow, I'm afraid something's happened to Ted, and I *couldn't* go out and have a good time feeling worried and not knowing." (Billy would be there, too!)

Randy didn't believe anything had happened to Ted. Randy wanted to go. Randy thought it was silly of Jill to make a great fuss over nothing. As like as not, Ted would come breezing in about half-past seven or eight, awfully apologetic, but he'd been having a good time and forgot all about bringing the car back. No sense in losing the whole evening just sitting around waiting for him!

In the end, Randy went off, still arguing, and Jill, worried and determined, stayed at home. Perhaps later, when Billy dropped in at Tangle Garden and found her not there, he would slip away and come here and see her. But that would not be until half-past eight at the least.

It was seven now, and still there were no signs of Ted. Beverley, with a child's prescience of something wrong, crept close to Jill and asked where Ted was. She put her arm around him, and they sat on the front step in the hot, late sunlight, watching the shadows slide across the grass, and starting at every distant sound of a motor horn. The air was breathless and still; the leaves hung motionless; the sun, fiery and blinding, was poised over a low bank of clouds in the west. Everything seemed to be waiting.

Half-past seven. "Time for you to go to bed, Bevvy." The child demurred, and Jill did not press it. She was acutely worried now. If only her father or her mother were here—Ted himself—anyone older

and wiser than she to take responsibility and tell her what to do. She racked her brains to remember the last name of the boy with whom Ted had been spending the day. It was either Wood or Woods. The boy was known as Butch.

Jill tried all the available Woods who lived on the Main Line, and they all—most of them indignantly—denied any relationship to a person called Butch. Then she started on the Woodses. The second house she called told her that she wanted Merion 274, and in another moment or two she was talking to Butch himself.

"Gosh, no," he said. "Ted left here ages ago—about half-past four. Said he had to take the car back so that his kid brother could use it. My word, that sounds pretty bad! Are you his sister? Well, I'd call up the hospitals, if I were you. Something might have happened—nothing serious, but enough to knock him out for a bit. Surely do hope nothing's wrong. I'll call you up in a little while and find out what you've heard."

Jill put down the receiver, feeling for the moment utterly panicky. She tried to remind herself that Ted had once said that Butch was "the world's worst calamity howler."

"Jill, why doesn't Ted come?" said Beverley at her side, infected by her anxiety. "Jill, is Ted hurt?"

"I don't know, darling. I don't think he's hurt.

But we'll find him." If only there were someone to say reassuring, meaningless things to her! She felt so desperately alone and inadequate.

She *could* not telephone the hospitals. There were scores of them all over the city. "Is my brother there? Has a boy been brought in, hurt?" (Perhaps killed.) She could not do it.

The telephone rang shrilly, and Jill, trembling, reached for the receiver. Probably this was Ted himself, with some ridiculously simple, commonplace explanation of his delay.

"Hello, Jill." It was Randy. "Ted in yet?"

"No." Tears of disappointment stung in Jill's eyes. "I called up Butch and he said Ted left at half-past four. He said to 'phone the hospitals."

"Butch is a cheerful soul," said Randy. "Police stations would be nearer it. Probably he's been pinched for speeding."

"But he'd let us know if he were," Jill insisted. "Randy, I don't like it. I wish you'd come home."

"Well—" said Randy slowly—"wait a sec."

Sounds of low conferring tones, a man's heavier rumble came across the wire.

"Mr. Jones says he'll 'phone the police station for you. I'll be right over."

Jill waited, in the little telephone room, leaning against the windowsill. The sun had disappeared behind the growing bank of black clouds, and there

was a strange yellow light over everything. The poplars turned their leaves over and showed the silver under sides, and a stray piece of paper sailed along low over the grass and rose into the air.

Beverley in the dimness beside her turned a solemn white face up to Jill, searching her expression for some clue to the meaning of all that was going on. He stood with his feet apart and his hands in his small pockets and waited anxiously to know what was the latest news. Jill tried to smile at him. He looked so worried, poor little tike.

The telephone rang again. Jill had the receiver pressed against her ear before the ring had stopped, and the harsh buzzing seemed to clatter on her eardrum.

"Yes?" she said as soon as it had ceased.

"Is this where Theodore Dale lives?" said a voice, cool and crisp.

"Yes."

"I'd like to speak with some member of his family —his father or mother."

Jill moistened her lips. "His father and mother are away. This is his sister speaking. Do you know—has anything——"

"This is the Bryant Hospital. Your brother has been in an accident." Jill knew it; she had known it all along; against her will she had known it from the first minute when he did not come home. "His car collided

with another late this afternoon," the impersonal voice went on. "He is in a very serious condition."

It was like some horrible nightmare. Jill's voice, husky and unfamiliar, spoke almost of its own volition. "Is he going to—will he——" She could not say the word.

"We cannot tell now. He is unconscious. Dr. Wagner has made the examination. If you come down here now you can confer with him. Perhaps it would be better—" there was a note of sympathy now in that starched voice at the end of the wire "—if you can reach his parents, to send for them."

Blindly Jill put the receiver down on the windowsill and, leaning against the wall, shut her eyes.

CHAPTER XIX

JILL GROWS UP

JILL, what's the matter? Jill, what's happened? Jill?" Beverley's small frantic voice.

Jill pulled herself together, and began to think fast. Her father and mother away, Ted dangerously injured, she was in the front-line trenches now; she must take charge of things. "Ted's been hurt, dear," she told Bev steadily, "and he's in the hospital, where they'll take care of him. You want to help, don't you, Bevvy? Well, run out to the cottage and tell McTavish to come here at once."

Turning to the 'phone again, she switched on the light to look up a number. She must get hold of their family doctor. Fortunately he was at home, and he promised to go right down to the hospital. Randy still not appearing, she called Western Union and tried to dispatch a telegram to her parents that would make them realize the gravity of the situation without frightening them unnecessarily. She sent it to Center Harbor. How far away it seemed, up there in the heart of New Hampshire. Would they leave the car

and catch a night train home, or would they drive all night, racing through the silent, elm-shaded New England towns, without news on the way, knowing only that their eldest was in danger?

Jill resolutely put the accident out of her mind—the lurch, the crash, the splintered glass, and Ted carried unconscious to the hospital.

"It's Mr. Ted, Bev says," said McTavish at her elbow. "There'll have been an accident with thae rrrred car?"

"Yes. He's at the hospital now—they say he's in a very serious condition. Randy will be here any minute, and we'll go right down there, so will you put Bev to bed and stay here in the house with him and answer the 'phone?"

"I was afraid o' this," said McTavish, shaking his head. "I've seen Mr. Ted come racin' into the driveway on two wheels mony and mony a time. But dinna you worry, Miss Jill. They hospitals is unco pessimistic. I'll tak' guid care o' the little one. Ye'll have had your denner?"

Jill shook her head. She had forgotten to eat anything. "I'm not hungry," she said. Why didn't Randy come?

There was a flash of lightning that showed the trees outside tossing their black boughs; then rain spattered against the screen, bringing with it the chilly smell of wet dust.

The screen door banged. "Jill? Where are you? Ted in yet?"

Billy's voice! "Here I am!" answered Jill.

In another second Billy loomed up in the narrow door behind McTavish—Billy, broad-shouldered, older, responsible!

"Oh, Bill, I'm so glad you're here!" she said in a voice freighted with relief. She turned to the task of persuading Beverley, who was clinging to her, to go up to bed. "You want to be a dear boy, don't you? Well, let McTavish take you upstairs, and don't keep me any longer. I must go to Ted, Bev."

"There *is* something wrong, then?" said Billy quickly. "I'll tell the taxi to wait."

"I don't want to go with McTavish," wailed Bev. "I want to go with you."

"Did ye never hear the tale of how the Bruce lay in the barrn and watched the wee spider?" said McTavish. Bev gulped and McTavish took his hand. "Come awa' upstairs and I'll tell you about it a'."

Randy clattered in, saying cheerfully, "Heard anything from Ted?"

Of course he didn't know. Jill, who felt as if years had passed over her since Randy telephoned from Tangle Garden, had almost come to think that everyone must know.

"It *was* an accident. He's at the Bryant Hospital

now, and I've wired Mother and Dad and sent for Dr. Porter. We'd better go right down there."

Randy turned white. "Is—is he much hurt, Jill?" he asked.

"He's unconscious now. They told me to send for Mother and Dad."

Realization struck Randy like a physical blow; he crumpled up into a chair and buried his head in his arms.

"Randy, you'll just have to pull yourself together," said Jill bracingly. "We can't waste any time. We ought to be on our way now."

She went to the front door, where Billy was waiting, and Randy followed her. In the lights from the taxi the rain showed up in long slanting lines of white against the blackness of the lawn.

"You can't go without a coat, Jill," said Billy. "Randy, you run up and get Jill's slicker and something to put on her head."

Randy returned after a moment with the rose-colored raincoat and the news that McTavish was getting Bev quietly to bed. Jill stepped first into the musty deep box of the cab, squeezing into one corner on the slippery leather seat, Billy followed, and Randy, his coat collar turned up and his hair already plastered close to his head by the driving rain, came last. They had very little to say as the car rushed, and slowed up, and swayed with clattering chains

through the rain over the shining black streets. Now and then the lightning glared fitfully, and for a second the lean column of a telegraph pole or the moving mass of a tree or the angular gable of a house started out of the blackness, and then it was dark again, while the thunder rolled distantly.

Through Jill's mind flashed a saying of McTavish's: "Eh, sirs, it's a wild nicht for a soul to be flitting." Ted, bandaged and unconscious . . .

They drew up before the hospital door at last. While Billy paid for the taxi, Jill and Randy hurried up the steps and into the lighted hall, where the regular hospital smell of iodoform and ammonia met them and chilled their very soul. The woman on duty at the desk by the door knew all about the case. Jill was thankful for that; she couldn't have endured waiting while people ran about and asked questions or fingered through a card index.

"He's just about the same. There hasn't been any change. Your own physician is up there with him now. There's a waiting room across the corridor. If you'll sit there I'll let you know as soon as he comes down. I don't believe you can see your brother yet, but I'll 'phone up and find out."

"Where's he hurt?" asked Randy hoarsely.

"Well, his arm and two or three ribs are broken, and his head is pretty badly hurt—they don't know if it's a fracture or just a bad concussion. If you'll

go into the waiting room for a few minutes, I'll send up word that you are here."

They filed into the tragic little waiting room. Jill wondered how many anxious hearts before hers had beat wildly there and jumped at the sound of a footstep or the low wooden rattle of the muted telephone. Randy hurled himself face down on the wicker couch and lay there without moving, except to twitch his shoulder impatiently when Jill tried to comfort him. Drawing a chair over close to hers, Billy sat down beside Jill and put his tanned hand over her white fingers as they nervously drummed and tapped on the arm of her chair.

"Nothing is going to happen to old Ted," he said. "It can't. There are too many people who are fond of him."

"That doesn't make any difference," replied Jill, feeling a little bit comforted just the same.

Time ebbed slowly. They waited, and heard only the dim noise of trolley bells out in the street, the occasional squeaking of a brake, the low voice of the woman at the desk, now and then a footfall down the corridor. Where were their father and mother now? Had they started for home, or were they just being called aside from some cheerful place of lights and wood fires and chilly mountain views to receive that horror-laden telegram? If only Ted could get well—Jill, in the dim, dreary little room that smelled of

iodoform, bargained with a God who seemed very far away—if only Ted could get well, she would——

Footsteps came to their door this time, and a woman's voice said, "They're in here, Doctor."

Randy rolled over and sat up. Jill's heart jumped into her mouth. Billy said to her, "Steady."

"Oh, here you are," said their kind family doctor. He was not jovial now. "Ted's a very sick boy," he told them soberly. "He's unconscious still. We can't tell at all how things are going to be. There's a nurse with him now—you can go up for a bit if you stay quiet and get out as soon as she signals to you to go." He looked at them keenly, at Jill, biting a quivering lip, and at Randy, white and shaken. "I'll tell them to bring you a good stiff dose of aromatic spirits of ammonia," he said.

"I'll go back to the house and see that everything is all right there," whispered Billy. "Be back later. Don't worry, Jill dear, I'm sure he'll come through safely."

Jill and Randy were taken upstairs in the elevator, a dingy old one that lifted and sank dizzily before it came to a stop at the third floor, and were led down long, dimly lighted corridors that reeked of antiseptics. As they passed one door they heard a low moan from the other side.

"Ted got over being mad ages ago," said Randy brokenly. "It was just my rotten disposition that

kept the fight going. Jill, if anything happens to Ted——"

"Nothing's going to happen to Ted," said Jill soothingly, knowing how hollow the words sounded, but knowing, too, that it does help to hear someone else utter as convictions the hopes that one scarcely dares have one's self. How she had drunk in Billy's words of reassurance!

"Here you are." The little nurse who was their guide opened one of the white doors for them and smiled encouragingly as she stood aside to let them in.

Jill had never before seen a hospital room. Its smallness and bareness shocked her. Buff walls, broken by one window near the ceiling, enclosed a square sterilized space that contained a chest of drawers, a chair where a nurse was sitting, an iron bedside stand, and a high narrow cot. That was all—except for the figure on the cot. One arm bound across his chest, the other lying inert by his side, Ted lay there, white from his bandaged head to the bump in the counterpane that was his feet, and heartbreakingly still. There was something touching, Jill thought, in the hospital nightshirt that he wore. Ted, who always sported orchid and rose-striped silk pajamas, done up in plain white cotton!

The doctor had left a chair by the bed, and Jill, slipping into it, leaned over and put her cool firm hand into Ted's limp one. The nurse signaled that she

would fetch another chair for Randy, but he declined it.

"I can't stand it," he whispered, choking. "I'll wait downstairs."

Jill stayed there, holding Ted's hand and watching his face, fancying now and then that his expression changed. Once the nurse rose to take his pulse, and once the house doctor came in to see how he was, but for the most part the nurse on one side of the bed and Jill on the other sat quietly waiting for a change that did not come.

The rain still rippled against the windowpane, and outside the night noises of the city went monotonously on. Jill felt as if time had ceased, as if they were suspended in some strange medium in which there were no minutes or hours or days, but only a still eternity in which life hung balanced and spiritual values in some strange way shifted.

At first she built a wall in her mind to shut out thought, for thought brought with it the possibility of a future without Ted; her whole being was concentrated in her will power; her heart thumped to the rhythm of her determination: "He must get well, he must get well, he must get well." Then, as inevitably she began to relax, thoughts stole in, thoughts not of the future—her soul shuddered sickly away from that—but little commonplace memories of the past and fragments of things people had said to her.

Tangle Garden in the fall, when the blue-gray trunks of the beeches showed through the thinning yellow leaves and the creek reflected the intenseness of the October sky, when the Virginia creeper on the stone walls of the house turned scarlet and a late nipped white rose or two in the garden added their faint-chilled fragrance to the winy air that was tinged with the smell of burning leaves from the next road.

"Tangle Garden—it's a guid name for a place," McTavish had said once, when Jill told him about it. "Eh, sirs, whiles I think all life's a kin' o' a tangle garden."

It had been a tangle garden for the Dales lately. Into what strange little bypaths and thickets they had wandered this summer, Jill thought. Susan, farthest away in actuality, up there in New Hampshire, writing home to share her fun; Randy, close at home but withdrawn in spirit, clinging with fierce loyalty to what was left of the old order he had known; Ted, society-loving and reckless, crashing into a broken unconsciousness from which he might not emerge to enjoy parties or picnics again; Dad, absorbed in his stock reports and irritable; Jill, herself, meeting each day irresponsibly, stretching out both hands greedily for new beauty and new experience, and holding, it seemed, nothing: all of them had wandered alone and blindly in a tangle garden. Only Mother had kept to her way, a wide, straight one,

wind-swept and sunny and free, trying all the time to call them together.

"Jill," a whisper reached her ears. Billy stood in the half-open door and beckoned. Jill rose and tiptoed out to him.

He had a thermos bottle in one hand and some graham crackers in the other. "McTavish sent you this." he told her in an undertone. "Here—watch out for your fingers, it's hot. He said you hadn't had any dinner. Any change?"

Jill shook her head, swallowing the strong, sweet tea. She had felt a little faint without realizing it; what ages had passed since lunch time! "How's Randy?" she whispered.

"He's gone to sleep now—he was all shot to pieces. He takes things harder than you'd expect from his casual manner. Your dad wired that they'd start right off and would be here some time to-morrow. They're going to stop at hotels in Greenfield and Waterbury for news, and we're to telegraph them there. Hadn't you better rest a bit, Jill? Sure you're all right?"

The doctors went in to see Ted again and to confer. Jill's hopes fluttered high, to sink again as the physicians came out gravely, saying, "Just the same."

It did help, though, she thought, as she slipped back to her post, to know that Mother and Dad were actually on the way and that they could get in touch with them at places along the route. It seemed as if

the long loneliness of Jill's worry and watching was almost over.

There are occasions when time seems to stand still, when one can almost see one's self slowly growing, as the miracles of photography show us the gradual unfolding of a leaf. This was one of those times. Jill felt herself growing up. Heretofore she had been a child, irresponsible, happy, eager to take whatever life offered, with no restrictions save those imposed by the will and judgment of her parents. A few hours of fear, fear for someone else—for Ted, whom she had worshiped as a kind of minor deity all of her sixteen years—were changing her. Jill knew now that her restrictions would not be those placed upon her from without, but those which she would find within herself, knew that her decisions would be her own. To see something glittering within one's grasp and to decide not to take it yet, to reach out for the something difficult that one does not see clearly—that, as Jill saw it, was to grow up. Some people, she realized, never grow up; they remain all their lives the boys and girls they were in the beginning, and when their parents no longer raise little walls of protection and warning, only the haphazard circumstances and chances of a complex mechanical world make limits for the zestful, lovable, grown-up children. Dad was one of them. Jill, looking on her family with a newfound, loving detachment, saw it now. He had been

like a boy over the Fortune, eager to enjoy it—and to make others enjoy it—eager to splurge, reaching joyously for the glittering thing. Mother, wise and mature, would have held back until they had all adjusted themselves to the new situation. Jill, in a swift bit of insight, knew that the years could not have always been easy for her mother, and knew, too, that Margaret Dale, like her children, would never have changed in the slightest degree the big, jolly, sympathetic, kindly grown-up boy whom they all adored. Ted, easy-going, good-natured, charming, reckless Ted would be like his father; Randy, when his ego had been pared down a little, would have more of their mother in him; Susan was gentle and sweet and unformed still, and Bev was only a baby; as for herself, Jill made some resolutions and hoped that she might learn to keep them.

With her elbow on the arm of the chair and her head on her hand she dozed, half conscious of the silent coming and going of figures and the doctor's low whisper. When she woke, the first light of earliest morning was stealing through the window, and Randy was sitting on a stool beside her. He looked white, and his eyes were big in his drawn face. Jill put up her hand to push his red hair gently off his forehead.

In that moment Ted stirred. A second later he opened his eyes, dazed at first by the bandage above them and the strange room and the tired pale faces

of Randy and Jill. Then he smiled, the dim ghost of Ted's infectious grin, but heartily reassuring to the two who watched.

"Hi, Ran!" he whispered weakly.

Billy took Jill and Randy home through the freshness of the sunrise. The streets were deserted, except for milk wagons and an occasional early trolley; the trees overhead were washed by the night's rain and freshly green; they whispered and moved in the coolness, and the birds made in them an uproarious racket—common English sparrows, and paunchy midsummer robins, dim flitting warblers, and gaudy, arrogant flickers. On the grass the dew was white and frosty, with dark marks where a milkman with his clinking bottles had walked across the lawn.

As Jill, almost too tired to hear the singing of her own heart, stumbled out of the taxi at Graylock, the front door opened, and a figure, black, goggled, lame, grotesque, but somehow inexpressibly comfortable, appeared with outstretched arms.

"Lura!" cried Jill. "Oh, Billy, did you get her for me?"

"How's Ted? How's my darling boy?" (Ted, the eldest, was always Lura's favorite.)

"He's going to be all right! Oh, Lura, Lura!"

"Dere, dere, child."

Down sat Lura on the front step, and took Jill, the grown-up, sobbing into her arms.

CHAPTER XX

THE KING OF FRANCE

SEPTEMBER crept along, bringing with it those intangible changes that mark the end of summer and the beginning of fall. Night closed down earlier, velvet black, deeper than the evenings of August; the locusts and katydids were less insistent, and a bit wistful, as if they knew that their little day was almost over; mornings were cooler, the sunlight more golden, the distances hazier. Purple asters followed the goldenrod in the fields around Tangle Garden; dark-veined, tawny day lilies blossomed along the creek; dahlias, deep-red single ones, heavy-headed double ones of cream color and rose, came to the gardens; the Norway maples showed faintly yellow leaves.

Graylock was at its best. Not since the very beginning, Jill thought, lying on the sun-warmed turf beside the swimming pool, had they all enjoyed it so much. The "six beautifully landscaped acres" and the "formal flower and vegetable gardens" poured their bounty into the "house of massive stone construction"; dahlias, early daisy chrysanthemums,

cosmos, pink and purple asters, corn and late beans, golden crook-necked squash, and New Zealand spinach. All the wanderers were home again: Ted, white and wobbly, his arm in a black-silk sling; Susan, tanned of face and sunburned of hair, with a collection of treasures made in "handcraft" and trophies won for swimming and singing; Mr. and Mrs. Dale, unusually quiet, filled with thankfulness for Ted's recovery; Randy, through with his job until, so he said, next summer. And as if the accident that had so nearly made a permanent gap in their circle had made them realize the preciousness of something which they had taken for granted, they stayed together more than they had done all summer, teasing and laughing at each other all the while lest they be embarrassed by being suspected of undue warmth of feeling. They had all shuddered when the poor battered wreck of the Red Imp had been towed home, and nobody demurred at Mr. Dale's decision not to have it rebuilt.

Jill missed Billy, who had gone back to West Point, but letters came regularly from him, and later she was to go up to West Point again for a football game and a hop. Sally, home once more from Long Cape, spent so much time at Graylock that her mother asked why she bothered to bring her clothes home at all. Lura reigned in the kitchen with a young darkey to help her, and a strong middle-aged colored woman

to come in twice a week to clean. Jill and Susan found themselves once more making beds and dusting, and vowing daily that if ever they had any sons they would teach them early to make their own beds.

And so things stood the week before school opened: life poised on a serene and happy plane, summer like a ripe peach ready to fall from the tree.

"I feel," said Jill, rolling over on the grass, "as if we were waiting for something to happen."

"What makes you say that, dear?" asked her mother, who was sitting on a green bench watching Randy and Jill playing around the pool like young seals.

"School begins next Tuesday," said Randy. "That's enough happening for me. I want to grab each day by the tail and yank it back!"

He conceived the idea that it would be awfully amusing if Jill were to lie perfectly still and rigid and he were to roll her into the pool. Jill gasped and gulped as she went under, came up for a brief blind second, and went down again gurgling as Randy dived for her feet.

"Ouf!" she spluttered, rising to the surface once more and swimming hard for the edge. "Randy, you beast! Mother, why did you let him—— Oh!"

Mrs. Dale was halfway across the lawn to meet Mr. Dale, who walked up from the garage as if he were tired and carried a heavy burden.

"Funny," said Randy. "What's Dad doing at home at this time of the morning?"

He stood dripping on the edge of the pool and reached down a wet strong hand to help Jill out.

"Hope he's not sick or anything," replied Jill. "We've had enough of that for one while. I'm going in."

When, a few minutes later, pucker-fingered and dressed, rubbing vigorously with a towel the damp hair that hung about her neck, she reached the house, she found no trace of either of her parents. The library door was closed, and as she passed it, she heard the sound of low, serious voices within. She ran upstairs, threw the towel into the hamper, and began to brush the gold waves of her hair.

"I think I'll invent a bathing cap that keeps your hair dry," she reflected, "and a straw that won't go off like a machine gun when you reach the bottom of the glass, and then I'll be—— Come in!"

Susan closed the door behind her. "Jill, I'm afraid something's wrong!"

Jill turned quickly. "What makes you think so, Sue?"

"Well, Dad's home——"

"Oh, well, that isn't fatal. There's no real reason why he shouldn't come home in the middle of the morning if he wants to!"

"But it's not only that. I heard what he said

to Mother when he first saw her. I wasn't listening, really. I couldn't help it. I was on the bench in the garden trying to sketch the fountain, and they walked right by on the other side of the shrubbery. He said, 'Margaret, I'm done for now. E. L. H. went down another twenty points.' And Mother said, 'Oh, my dear!' They've been shut up in the library talking ever since."

"Sounds like something about stocks," said Jill wisely. She twisted her short hair into a little bun, held it firm with one hand, and reached for hairpins with the other. "They'll tell us if it's anything important," she added.

"Jill, may I come in?" Ted asked from the other side of the door. He sauntered in. "Did Sue tell you about her eavesdropping?"

"Oh, Ted!"—from Sue.

"Looks to me as if Wall Street was getting in some dirty work against the Dales. There's been a kind of electric atmosphere for the last month or more, anyhow." Ted shifted his sling and sat down in an armless chair.

"Dad looked awfully *worried*," said Sue.

Jill reached for another hairpin and found none. "I'll go see if Mother has any," she murmured, glad of the excuse to escape. She felt vaguely uneasy—there had certainly been a time when Dad had been

anxious about investments—but she did not want to discuss the matter with Ted and Sue.

The door of her parents' room was ajar, and her mother stood by the window looking out over the lawn. Something in her attitude as she stood there with one hand against the window frame and the other motionless by her side suggested a troubled spirit.

Jill paused in the door. "Mother, is—is anything wrong?"

Mrs. Dale turned and smiled. "Yes, Jill, there is. Oh, nothing vitally wrong—like illness. Dad has been unfortunate in his investments and has lost a great deal of money."

Jill sat down on the bed with a dump. "How much money?" she said.

"Well, all he had."

"All of the Fortune?"

"Yes, dear, I'm afraid so."

The Fortune gone! That amazing piece of melodrama, which had come like a thunderclap, now vanishing like a golden bubble! But they'd only had it a short time! They'd scarcely begun to enjoy it!

"Oh, *Mother!*" said Jill.

"It's too bad, darling. Dad is so dreadfully distressed about it—he feels that it means so much to all of you children and that he has failed you. So for his sake try to take it as bravely as you can."

"But, Mother, don't you mind, too?"

"Oh, yes, of course,"—quietly. "But mostly on Dad's account and yours. So much money and so many possessions were a little bit burdensome sometimes. And after the horrible anxiety we've come through about Ted, this trouble seems almost a minor one. Jill dear, it's nearly lunch time, and Alice has gone to bed with a bad headache. Would you mind running down and helping to set the table? And, Jill, don't say anything about all this at lunch. I'd rather it wouldn't reach the kitchen just yet. We'll all talk the situation over together this afternoon."

Jill started down the stairs in a daze. The fortune gone! She could not believe it. It must be a ghastly nightmare from which she would wake with a start. But squirm away from the fact as she might, deep in her heart she knew that it was there, and that it would have to be faced. "It's the kind of thing that *would* happen to us!" she told herself disgustedly.

"Pzsst!" A sharp whisper from the landing above made her turn. Randy's red head leaned far over the banister. "Jill," he hissed, "what's up?"

"We're poor again," replied Jill, going on. "Ask Mother about it."

On the way to the dining room to set the table, she paused to glance in at the living-room door. Her father was sitting on the divan with his hand over his forehead. Jill, looking at him, felt her heart swell

with sympathy. She slipped in and sat down beside him, twining her fingers through his.

"Don't feel so badly, Daddy," she said. "We—we don't mind—*much*."

Truth compelled her to add that last word; it would have been a noble lie, she felt, but too unconvincing to be worth attempting.

Her father took her hand in both of his and patted it.

"I suppose the thing that hurts," he said, "is that, having had it actually in my grasp, I lost it. I not only can't seem to make a lot of money for all of you myself, but I can't even keep what fortune gives me!"

"But it wasn't your fault, Dad!"

"Yes, it was, dear child. I haven't managed it properly from the start. It's rather a well-worn and familiar tale in financial circles, my dear. I invested a good deal in an oil company which soon after went up the spout completely. The men at the back of it are now disporting themselves unostentatiously somewhere in Europe. Then, growing worried—we'd spent so much for this house and the furniture, cars, and so on, and it costs a tremendous lot to keep it running—I looked about to see how I could triple what was left. I was persuaded into buying E. L. H. It seemed so absolutely safe that I bought heavily of it—on margin. To-day E. L. H. goes down another twenty

points—and there you are! What we had is gone, and some more that I had to borrow. I couldn't have managed very much worse for you if I'd tried!"

Jill, not knowing exactly what to say, squeezed his hand in answer. It was even worse than she thought at first. "All that we had is gone, and some more that I had to borrow." What would they do? Jill saw herself dismissing college with a gesture, valiantly entering the business world to retrieve the family fortunes. Her dark blue serge with white collars and cuffs would be shabby but touchingly neat; in spite of her fatigue, she would have a smile for everyone. She would make all the family laugh at dinner with her accounts of her crabbed boss. "If it weren't for Jill . . ."

Mr. Dale rose and began to walk up and down the room, his hands in his pockets. "The Joneses want to buy Tangle Garden," he said. "We'll have to have a family confab and decide what to do about it." He took out his watch. "It's almost lunch time now."

Jill remembered that she was to set the table. She went about it rather soberly, with a little wrinkle between her brows and a bruised feeling at her heart.

Just as she was finishing, the two boys came in, and the three, drawing over in the recess of the window, discussed the situation in low tones.

"Sell Tangle Garden?" said Randy, aghast.

"How much is lost, anyhow?" demanded Ted practically.

"Everything," said Jill dramatically. She liked her tragedy black.

"Has this place gone to the bow-wows, too? I don't believe it has," objected Ted.

"Dad owes some money," said Jill.

"Well, anyhow, Dad's still a lawyer. Probably we can salvage enough to exist in shabby gentility—hash and stew and oleomargarine, except when there's company, and cotton stockings for you, Jill, and——"

"Don't try to be funny," said Jill crushingly. "This is really serious, Ted."

"Well, if we *are* paupers on the county, heaven help us," said Ted. "I've only got two more years of college, but you two embryonic young things are still in school!"

"College!" put in Randy scornfully. "You don't think you'll be able to stay on at college eating your head off, do you?"

"Gosh," said Ted. "I never thought of that. Ye gods!"

Nobody was hungry at lunch, and nobody had very much to say. Jill tried conscientiously to eat and to chat cheerfully about impersonal, commonplace things, but she felt bewildered and baffled. It all seemed unreal: the Fortune gone, Dad filled with a sense of failure, the future vague and insecure.

All the pretty things about them, were they to vanish forever after such a short time of possession?

She loved the dining-room fireplace with its sturdy brass Hessians for andirons, the view through the open window of the garden and the lawn beyond, the bank of trees and shrubbery over which showed the peaked roof of the garage and the iron weathervane in the shape of a full-rigged ship veering coquettishly in the breeze. Jill was to have had a fur coat this winter, too. But how small to think of that when their very home was in danger!

They met in solemn conclave in the library after lunch. Mrs. Dale sat in a big chair, and Jill took a stool at her feet, while Susan perched on the broad arm. Randy bestrode a straight chair with his arms folded across its back, and Ted leaned against the mantel in his favorite attitude. Mr. Dale moved about nervously. For a long moment no one spoke.

"We'd like to know just how badly off we are, Dad," ventured Ted respectfully. "How about this place?"

"We own this place, except for what I've had to borrow on it. We own Tangle Garden, too, except for a small mortgage. Mr. Jones would like to buy it. I thought for a little while that perhaps if we sold Tangle Garden and part of our land here—building lots come high in Chestnut Hill—and lived very economically, we might possibly be able to hang on to this place by our eyelashes, but your mother thinks, and I agree with her, that it would be too much of a strain. Still, I want to put it up to you, and if you

really would be heartbroken to leave it, we'll see what we can do. But McTavish would have to go, and 'Enry, and we'd have to pare down expenses like everything—and still be worried toward the end of each month."

"Well, if we sold this and paid off what you—what was borrowed," asked Ted, "would there be enough left to pay off the mortgage on Tangle Garden?"

"Yes, there would, and enough besides to start a very substantial college fund."

"Well, then, I don't see what all the fuss is about," said Randy bluntly. "I'd rather live in Tangle Garden than in this place any day in the year."

"You sometimes found it a tight squeeze as we used to live," Mr. Dale reminded them. "It would be going back to precisely the same thing—two in a room, and not enough hot water, and the trolley to school, and all that sort of thing. I won't be making a bit more than I used to make, and nothing would induce me to touch that college fund."

"Still, if we stayed here, so far as I can tell," put in Susan plaintively, "we'd have oceans of room, but we wouldn't have anything to wear and not a whole lot to eat!"

Everybody laughed and felt better.

"And could we bear," said Mrs. Dale, speaking for the first time, "to sell Tangle Garden? Why, it's part of us!"

"No, we couldn't sell Tangle Garden," Jill agreed quietly.

But what would people say when they heard that the Dales were trooping back to the old house, their fortune spent within six months! How absurd they were going to appear in the eyes of the world!

"The only way to avoid looking like giddy idiots," said Ted slowly, as if in answer to Jill's thoughts, "would be to stay here and eat shoe leather."

"I'd rather *look* like a giddy idiot than *be* one," countered Randy sharply.

To live in a great house far beyond their means and their power to keep up as it ought to be kept, to pinch and scrape and maneuver in order that the things which showed might be all right while the unseen things grew shabbier and shabbier, to sell Tangle Garden with its host of associations and memories out of their possession forever and ever—it was a high price to pay for the questionable pleasure of keeping up appearances.

"Oh, let's go back!" said Jill fervently

"That's what I say!" from Susan.

"Good grief, we couldn't do anything else!" Randy exploded.

Mr. Dale asked, "How about you, Ted?"

"Tangle Garden," Ted answered, smiling a little with one eyebrow raised.

"Good," said Mrs. Dale. "I knew you'd all feel

that way as soon as you thought about it. Now, I have a plan."

Jill rose from her stool and went to perch on the windowsill. A little while ago, she told herself, she would have been overjoyed to find that they were not facing utter ruin, that she would not have to give up college and don the stenographer's blue serge. But there was something dramatic about complete disaster that would have summoned all her courage. To give up the luxury and comfort that she reveled in and be thankful that it was no worse—that called for contentment, which is a virtue considerably harder to produce upon demand.

"I've always wanted to see what a really good man could do with our land there at Tangle Garden," her mother was saying. "I believe he could make it pay. It's fertile soil, and it lies well, and there are good markets near by. Now, if the mortgage is paid off, we save every year what we would have spent on interest. I believe if we offered McTavish a small salary and a good percentage of what he makes out of the garden, he'd consider the proposition. He's very much afraid of finding an employer who is overbearing and hard to get along with, and he seems fond of us. I believe he'd do it! He could live in the old coachman's rooms over the stable. And wouldn't it be fun to have Tangle Garden a going concern? What do you all think about it?"

"You wouldn't tear out the garden itself to plant potatoes in, would you?" said Randy cautiously.

"Oh, no, angel boy, nor the front lawn either. But there's all that land at the back." Mrs. Dale spoke rapidly and persuasively; her eyes were bright with her enthusiasm. "We could have things like asparagus and ever-bearing strawberries, and tomatoes, and so on. And then McTavish could keep the lawn and the garden in order, too."

"Dale and McTavish, market gardeners! Three cheers!" cried Ted teasingly.

"I'd simply loathe giving up McTavish," said Jill. "He seems almost like one of the family. You ought to have seen him, Mother, the night Ted was hurt. The point is, will he take us up on an offer like that?"

"I think he would," said Mr. Dale. "It's worth trying, at any rate."

Jill looked out over the sweep of lawn and shrubbery. How would McTavish like to exchange that, and the exquisite little circular garden, and the rose-grown pergola by the swimming pool for a scrambly, overgrown, willful, simple place like Tangle Garden?

Through the trees she could see the gabled roof of the House Next Door.

"I'll bet we'll go away before the People Next Door get home!" she said wonderingly. "Doesn't it seem funny, to come and go without ever having talked to them!"

"Well, when you come to think of it," observed Ted cheerfully, "our being here at all has been funny!"

"Tell you what it reminds me of!" Jill slid down from the windowsill and hooked her arm through her father's.

"The King of France and all his men
Marched up a hill . . . and then
Marched down again!"

CHAPTER XXI

CHRISTMAS EVE

IT WAS Christmas Eve, and the Dales were back in Tangle Garden! It was to be a white Christmas this year; the snow lay a foot deep over the lawn, glistening in the moonlight, patterned in deep purple shadows by the bare branches of the black trees. The spring house was almost hidden under drifts; the grape arbor was an Eskimo cave, guarded by Beverley's fat snowman; the old garden, chilly and mysterious, showed every twig and lingering dead leaf furred with white.

Indoors all was light and warmth and gaiety. The big Christmas tree stood in one corner of the living room waiting for the bright balls and tinsel which Ted had brought down from the attic before he had gone off to call for Dabney. (All the old Christmas tree ornaments, the paper and tinsel angels, the twisted icicles, the rose-glass teapot, the red-clad Santa Clauses with loops hanging from the middle of their backs, the big red and green and silver balls, some of them with jagged holes, had stayed in the corner of the attic all the time the Dales were away.)

Jill, Christmasy in scarlet, with a sprig of holly in her hair, flew about with a long rope of ground pine, trying its effect in every available place that was not already filled with holly or the silver-green long-leaf pine that had come from some relatives in the South. Behind an elaborate screen of chairs Susan was tying up some last-minute Christmas gifts. Randy and Mr. Dale were clearing the parlor floor for dancing. Upstairs Beverley was going angelically to bed, and his clear pipe could be distinctly heard as he told his mother all the things that he expected Santa (about whose existence he had in August professed the deepest skepticism) to put in his stockings.

There was a cheerful banging on the door knocker, and Jill flew to answer it. On the step, stamping their feet to shake the snow off, were Sally, Billy, and Walker, J. P., who was spending the holidays with Billy because his own home was too far away for such a short vacation.

"Hello, come in! Merry Christmas, everybody!"

"Jill, give these to your mother to keep for you, and don't"—severely—"don't peek!"

"Well, Jill!"

"Well, Billy! J. P., it's dandy to have you here!"

They came in laughing and talking, bringing a little cloud of chilly air with them, and shed their coats and hats and goloshes over hall and settee and banister, before they flocked into the living room

to warm their hands by the open fire and admire the tree and the Christmas garlands everywhere. McTavish came in with another big log for the fire, and lingered, ostensibly to "mak' siccer it wat burrrn," but actually to watch all the young gaiety. Jill, just for the fun of seeing his kindly blue eyes gleam under the overhanging brows, broke off a bit of holly and stuck it in his buttonhole. If Ted was the favorite of old Lura, whose black eyes behind their goggles were even now peering through the glass in the dining-room door in search of her boy, Jill was adored by the crusty, philosophical old Scotsman, and the knowledge gave her a little glow of pleasure.

Dabney, with Ted and the debonair Twig, completed the party. Jill's first feeling, when Dabney emerged from her squirrel coat, exquisite but appallingly sophisticated in king's blue velvet with a long string of square-cut crystals, was one of doubt: would their simple little party be sufficiently amusing to a person of such splendor? Reminding herself stoutly that Dabney, even though she must have known "what she was getting into," had chosen this in preference to other more elaborate affairs, she set at once about making the party go.

"There's the tree," she said suggestively to this one and that one as they shifted to the edge of the milling, chattering group, "and there are the things." But such gentle hints had no effect whatsoever.

Jill climbed on a chair. "Ladies," she began loudly, "and cadets, and bad little boys! The object this evening is work!" (Mock groans from the assemblage and the announcement from Twig that the Bricklayers' Union wouldn't let him work after three o'clock.) "All those ornaments," went on Jill sternly, pointing to the heaping boxes underneath the tree, "have to be artistically hung on that there balsam!"

"I'll do the candy toys!" offered J. P.

Mrs. Dale came downstairs at that moment, and they all crowded around her. "Dabney dear, it's nice to see you! Of course I remember Mr. Walker, J. P.! And, Twig, I'm glad you could get here, after all! Sally and Billy, I've seen you three or four times already to-day, and so I'm not going to shake hands with either of you!"

Mr. Dale put a large flat package down on the table. "Dance records," he said. "They're really Christmas presents, but I've decided to let you have them to-night."

The tree trimming began. The group was too large for everyone to work at once, and so there was a constant shifting between the tree and the parlor, where the phonograph was always going merrily. The old parlor was a pretty sight. Somehow, the improvements which they used to dream of had been made. The woodwork, painted for the Joneses, continued to gleam on, as Randy said, for the Dales; enough

money had been taken from the college fund—"There goes my diploma fee," Jill said, "and Randy's football suit and Susan's cap and gown and Bev's—oh, well, we'll all be making enough money by that time to shoot Bev through on gold wheels"—to open up the old fireplace and give it a beautiful carved Colonial mantel, bought for not very much from an old house that was being torn down to make way for a modern apartment house; some of the best and simplest pieces of mahogany had been brought from Graylock: the Duncan Phyfe chairs, a pie-crust table, a dignified sofa, and a desk that had been made from an old spinet. To-night the room had the added charm of the Christmas decorations, the graceful figures and happy faces of the dancers.

Under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Dale the tree was becoming what Twig chose to call a "wision of delight."

"Next year," said Jill, looking critically at a red Santa Claus, a blue-garbed, pink wax cherub, and a large green ball hand-painted with gold stars, all in the closest proximity, "let's have it entirely in scarlet and silver."

"And throw away the old things? Gosh, Jill," Randy the conservative spoke, "that wax dololly is the first thing I remember about Christmas. I wanted to eat it."

"Too bad you didn't!" chuckled Jill.

"Don't you think this big star ought to go at the very top, Mr. Dale?"

"Mother, where's the fence that used to go around the village under the tree?"

"Dabney, you've slaved long enough over the Dales' Christmas tree. Come and dance with me—it's the new waltz that Dad brought."

"There's candy on the piano. Do please everybody help themselves."

"No, you don't, Billy. This is my dance with Jill."

"Wind the phonograph, someone!"

"Do you mean to say you came through this summer without having the phonograph fixed?"

"No, this is the one we had at Graylock, but even it has to be wound sometimes. Give the poor thing a chance!"

"I just adore this nice shiny, fuzzy tinsel."

"Come here, some of you boys, and help with the lights for the tree. Something's wrong with the battery."

There was a brief interval while the boys, after the manner of their kind, lost interest in everything but the problem of adjusting the wires and tiny bulbs, while the girls sat about and offered useless and humorous advice.

The obscure trouble was found and remedied at last, and the room was darkened to give full effect to all the little red and green lights that twinkled over the

tree. A little hush fell as they looked at it. Ever since Jill could remember, ever since the days when the tree with its lights had been to her something not quite real, that mysteriously came for a few days and disappeared again, it had stood in just that place between the windows and worn just that cheerful jumble of colors, and always its first appearance had been greeted with just that little expectant hush. It could not have been the same at Graylock.

"Time for us to go out and sing now," said Mr. Dale, switching on the lights again.

It was a time-honored custom for the Dale children and their friends on Christmas Eve to go about the neighborhood singing carols. People expected it now.

There was a scurry for wraps and goloshes. Jill crammed a tight little black velvet cap over her hair and wrapped her fur-trimmed green coat around her. Billy beside her was erect and military in his gray-blue overcoat with the shoulder cape thrown back and the brass buttons gleaming—and so good-looking!

The night air was frosty; it stung their cheeks and turned their breath into chilly little gray plumes; after the warm indoor fragrance of balsam and burning pine knots, it was crystal clear and scentless.

"We'll start at old Mrs. Bascom's," said Mr. Dale.

"She's in her doting age, poor soul," explained Sue kindly to Dabney, "but she loves the singing all the same."

Crunching the snow underfoot, they streamed by twos and threes across the lawn and down the glittering white sharp-rutted road. As they approached the house of the little old lady whose rheumatism kept her always chained to a chair, they stopped calling back and forth to each other and assembled in a close group.

Susan gave the key, and in a moment the old joyful song rang out:

"The first Noël the angels did say,
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,
In fields as they lay keeping their sheep
On a cold winter's night that was so deep."

Perhaps it was a night something like this one, with the snow in drifts, the long-dead wisps of field grass sticking up through the windswept places, and the moon making shadows of the trees over the whiteness. Or perhaps they didn't have snow in Palestine—no, of course not. What a lot, thought Jill, they missed.

The other verses followed, and then "I saw three ships a-sailing," and finally the one that was their own favorite, "Good King Wenceslas." They all sang the first verse together; then Billy's clear baritone alone took up the good king's words:

"'Hither, page, and stand by me,
If thou know'st it telling
Yonder peasant who is he,
Where and what his dwelling?'"

And Susan's voice rose high and sweet and sure in the page's answer:

"'Sire, he lives a good league hence,
Under yonder mountain,
Just beneath the forest fence
By St. Agnes' fountain.'"

How happy they were, thought Jill, and how removed from want or suffering. For a moment she lost the thread of the song, but came in heartily on the last lines:

"Wherefore Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now do bless the poor
Shall yourselves find blessing!"

The singing broke up there with a chorus of "Merry Christmas," and the waits went on to the next house.

"It's a lucky thing that King Wenceslas didn't live in these times, isn't it, Jill?" said Dabney teasingly.

Jill, having long since ceased to be sensitive about her attempt at philanthropy, laughed with the rest.

"Jill did her best to bless the Goldsteins," said Billy, "but they didn't take it in the right spirit."

"You mean the right *spirits*," corrected Randy.

Loud groans greeted this very bad attempt at a pun, and Twig tried unsuccessfully to ram a handful of snow down the offender's neck.

"Well, you were perfectly right about the Goldsteins, Billy," said Jill, as she walked along between Billy and Sally. It was the first time since Billy's fatal grin that she had had a chance to discuss that once sore subject with him. "I didn't use my head at all. To tell the truth, I suppose I did what I did as much because I was bored as because I really wanted to help. I'd feel dreadfully about the harm I did to the Goldsteins if Mother hadn't stepped in and found work for the woman and started the man on the right track."

"Mrs. Dale can bless the poor like good King Wenceslas and find blessing herself," said Sally affectionately.

The next stop was at Sally's house, where her aunt was visiting her and her mother over Christmas. They sang for them, and they sang for Billy's father, though privately Jill thought the effort was wasted there. The gloomy greenish-gray house glowered under its mansard roof, and only a dim light in the library windows showed that there was any life within. Two or three other places completed their rounds, and they turned homeward toward the hot chocolate and creamed chicken that Lura would be preparing, and the marshmallows that were waiting to be toasted at the two fireplaces.

Tangle Garden lay half hidden in the shadows from the big beeches, and the Christmas candles in

the windows twinkled on the snow. A light in the swinging lantern over the white doorway, a holly wreath on the door knocker, snow on the deep roof, wood smoke rising from the chimney into the star-filled sky.

Mr. and Mrs. Dale went ahead, arm in arm; in the frosty starlight they seemed as young and were as gay as Ted and Dabney who followed them. Behind Billy and Jill came Randy and Susan, Sally and Twig and J. P., all engaged in lively badinage. Upstairs in the old gray stone house, Jill knew, the little brother was asleep with his felt elephant in his arms.

Jill took a long breath.

Billy, drawing her mittened hand through his arm, looked down at her soberly, and then smiled. "Happy?" he said.

Happy? Jill was aglow with happiness, shot through with a swift ecstatic joy that made her heart bump against her throat. How much they had! Ted well and strong again, their father no longer worried, Tangle Garden painted and furnished and cared for, the old happy-go-lucky family life again. She knew of no other family in which there was so much love and good will, true companionship and shared good times, as there was in hers. Between Billy and his father, she knew, there was no sympathy; Sally and her mother, alone, had to struggle with poverty; Dabney, another only child, lived with adoring but fussy

grandparents because her mother in Paris and her father in California could not agree to make a home; in Twig's family was constant teasing and fretting and bickering.

"I don't want to be mean," said Billy at her side, "but I can't help being glad that for to-night, at least, the Dales lost their fortune and had to come back to Tangle Garden."

Jill looked at her parents, laughing as they fumbled with the holly wreath that got in the way of the door knocker, and then at the girls and boys around her.

"The real fortune of the Dales," she said softly, "isn't the one they lost."

FINIS